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PHOTO: GREG SEATON

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Tony Popovic is this season's Argo

By Andrew Bishara



It's going to be hard to look past Tony Popovic for Manager of the Season. Very hard. Come the End-of-Season Awards, if Popovic's name isn't read out, there is some serious problems in the heart of the players' association. However, I highly doubt that they would make such a decision. The other awards up for grabs: the Johnny Warren Medal, Golden Boot, Goalkeeper of the Year and so forth, will go down to the wire. The Manager of the Year is such a certainty; it's the equivalent of Argo in the Oscars race: there can be no other winner.

Given a fresh new squad to mould together, few and I mean, very few expect the Western Sydney Wanderers to make such an impact. Making the finals would have been overachieved. Finishing the season as the Premiers Plate winners is like Liverpool jumping the gun and winning the Premier League. That's no disrespect to any of the Western Sydney players. We knew success was going to come, just not this fast.

The nine consecutive wins is the pinnacle of how effectively Popovic has put his touch on the team. A defender by trade,

it's no wonder the Wanderers have the best defensive record in the league. For a time there, the Wanderers couldn't score. It was as Popovic was making his team too defensive, too counter-attacking, too much of a defender's team; where the 0-0 is better than losing.

The plan in the end was to establish a solid defence. Popovic knows that defence wins championships, not goal scorers. Time was the only factor. Once everyone understood their roles, the emphasis on working hard, the goals would come. And the emphasis on working hard isn't an understatement. After notching win after win, Popovic didn't give his teams a time for a breather. He doubled the training sessions. "Tony will put on a drill and ensure the boys take it on themselves to take on the drills with very high intensity. Although it is hard work, it is always focused tactically on the opponents we are taking on," defender Adam D'Apuzzo told Foxsports.com. "What I've seen from Poppa is his level of detail – down to the small details in the game," D'Apuzzo said. "He and (assistant coach) Ante Milicic really analyse the game for hours on the opposition, so we improve and know what to counter."

That quick look inside the camp highlights the importance of tactics to the Wanderers. Tactics

don't win games though, players do and Popovic has been a revelation in his man-management skills.

The Wanderers players adore him; he's given many of them a fresh start. Nikolai Topor-Stanley, Mark Bridge, Michael Beauchamp are just some that have been reborn under his tutelage. Not to forget the success of Shinji Ono. At first, his impact wasn't of the same level of the two other marquee signings, Del Piero and Heskey. Steadily his impact grew and now it's hard to see the Wanderers without him. Mariners coach Graham Arnold said that the "premiership plate is nearly gone. Western Sydney Wanderers have got two hands on it now." In response to this comment, Popovic walked out and said, calm and cool as always, that "the job is not done...there is still some work to be done, and this group knows that."

Everyone knows how much hard work Popovic has put into the team. That hard work has given him the accolades he deserves. Frightening its not over yet. The Wanderers are the favourites for the Championship and while anything can happen in the next month of football, there is one certainty: Popovic is this season's Argo; there's just no stopping him.

Twitter: @_andrewbishara



Tony Popovic has exceeded all expectations so far this season. Photo: ALI ERHAN

ACL Wrap

Bunyodkor snatched a late draw at home to Pohang Steelers in the AFC Champions League on Wednesday, while Djibril Cisse starred.

Mirjalol Qosimov's Bunyodkor, semi-finalists last year, needed until the dying moments to secure a 2-2 draw against three-time champions Pohang in Tashkent.

They took a 15th-minute lead in the Group G clash as Oleksandr Pishchur finished smartly after receiving a long pass.

But Pohang equalised through Myeong-Ju Lee in the 60th minute before Gwang-Hoon Lee headed them in front soon after.

Just as the K-League side looked set to collect all three points, substitute Kamoliddin Murzoev slid in to equalise in the 94th minute, diverting in Jasur Hasanov's shot-cum-cross.

Bunyodkor are top of the group thanks to the late equaliser as second-placed Beijing Guoan recorded a 2-1 win at home to Sanfrecce Hiroshima.

Piao Cheng scored the winner in the 79th minute, firing an effort from just outside the area into the bottom corner.

In Group C, Cisse led Al Gharafa to a 3-1 win over Sepahan at Thanhi Bin Jassim Stadium in Doha.

On loan from Queens Park Rangers, Cisse cancelled out Mohammad Ahmadi's 14th-minute opener before putting his side ahead in the second half.

Majdi Sidiq sealed the points with his goal in additional time.

An Amad Al Hosni brace led Saudi side Al Ahli three points clear atop the group with their 2-1 victory at United Arab Emirates' Al Nasr.

Dazzling Domingues damages determined Mariners

By Ben O'Neill



**Kashiwa Reysol 3
Central Coast 1**

A brilliant brace from crafty Brazilian Leandro Domingues helped J-League outfit Kashiwa Reysol secure a 3-1 victory over Central Coast Mariners in Japan on Wednesday.

Patrick Zwaanswijk had given the Mariners an early lead in front of a vociferous crowd of 6,472 spectators at the Hitachi Soccer Stadium, however Kashiwa's class ultimately told as Nelsinho Baptista's men claimed three valuable Group H points against a proud Central Coast team. Zwaanswijk headed an Oliver Bozanic corner beyond Sugeno Takanori in just the eighth minute of play to give the Mariners a dream start against the 2012 Japanese Emperor's Cup winners.

But the dazzling Domingues managed to finish clinically past Mathew Ryan just 13 minutes later to level proceedings, before Kano Kenta deftly flicked the ball into the back of the net to give Reysol a 2-1 lead 67 minutes in.

Domingues was at his brilliant best for Kashiwa's third goal, which ultimately guaranteed Baptista's team



Patrick Zwaanswijk opened the scoring with a powerful header for the Mariners, but the J-league side soon hit back, lead by its classy Brazilian imports.

recorded maximum points from their first two 2013 AFC Champions League encounters. Back-heeling the ball into the path of the pacey Fujita Masato, Domingues then made a telling run into the box before placing his volley beyond Ryan.

Central Coast Mariners' anguish from the penalty spot unfortunately continued late on, with substitute Michael McGlinchey striking an effort from 12-yards direct at Sugeno after tireless attacker Mitchell Duke had been tripped in the box. Disappointingly, McGlinchey's penalty effort was the fifth in a row the Mariners

have missed in all competitions. While displeased with having lost to Reysol, Central Coast Mariners coach Graham Arnold outlined after the game that the key difference between the two sides on the night was the inspired Domingues – a player believes better than anyone currently playing in the A-League.

"The only difference was their number ten, Domingues," Arnold said. "He's total quality."

"His first finish was a great finish. We gave away two cheap goals, and in international football if you give away possession like that you get punished."

"(But) the third goal from them was absolutely world class," he said. The Mariners went into the second game of their 2013 AFC Champions League campaign with a relatively inexperienced line-up, with Arnold opting to fill his first eleven on the evening with as many fresh legs as possible.

The result of Arnold's astute selections was a team full of running, and one able to compete determinedly with a well-oiled Kashiwa side for the majority of the Matchday 2 encounter.

Arnold praised his "kids" who again proved to themselves they can com-

pete on the international stage. "We had five 21-year-olds out there and the performance and the fight tonight was very good, it was more like I expect," he said.

"It's an experience for the younger boys and they're only going to get better out of it."

"We finished the game with six or seven young boys. Sure, it hurts to lose away from home but against the top side we're not embarrassed."

Despite only having one point from two AFC Champions League games thus far, Arnold believes reaching the second round of Asia's premier club competition is still well within his side's reach.

Gaining three points against Gui-zhou Renhe in Gosford on Wednesday 3 April will place the Mariners well in the reckoning to advance to the next phase of the tournament, especially given Korea Republic's Suwon Bluewings recorded a scoreless draw at home to the Chinese Super League side this evening.

"We've got to win our homes games now," he said. "We've got the Chinese at home and we've got the Japanese Reysol at home as well."

"I am sure we can do that."

ACL Group H Standings

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Kashiwa Reysol	2	2	0	0	4	1	+3	6
2 Suwon Bluewing	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	
3 Guizhou Renhe	2	1	1	0	1	1	-1	
4 Central Coast ...	2	0	1	1	1	3	-2	1

Kashiwa Reysol 3 - 1 Central Coasts

Suwon Bluewings 0 - 0 Guizhou Renhe

Match Details

Kashiwa Reysol 3 (Domingues 21', 88', Kano 67')

Central Coast Mariners 1 (Zwaanswijk 8')

Hitachi Soccer Stadium, Kashiwa

Attendance: 6,472

Referee: Ali Hamad Albadawi (Uae)

Kashiwa Reysol: 2. Fujita Masato, 3. Kondo Naoya, 5. Musuhima Tatsuya, 7. Otani Hidekazu (C), 9. Masato Kudo, 10. Leandro Domingues, 11. Cleo, 14. Kano Kenta, 21. Sugeno Takanori (Gk), 29. Taniguchi Hiroyuki, 30. Yamanaka Ryosuke

Substitutes Not Used: 1. Kirihata Kazushige (Gk), 17. Akino Hiroki, 18. Tanakura Junya, 19. Kimura Yu, 23.

Watanabe Hirofumi, 26. Ota Tetsuro, 28. Kurisawa Ryochi

Yellow Cards: Nil

Red Cards: Nil

Central Coast Mariners: 1. Mathew Ryan (Gk), 5. Zachary Anderson, 6. Patrick Zwaanswijk, 7. John Hutchinson (C), 8. Adriano Pellegrino (14. Michael McGlinchey 59'), 11. Oliver Bozanic, 13. Brent Griffiths, 16. Trent Sainsbury, 17. Anthony Caceres (18. Nick Montgomery 74'), 19. Mitchell Duke, 29. Nick Fitzgerald (9. Bernie Ibini 70')

Substitutes Not Used: 20. Justin Pasfield (Gk), 15. Brad McDonald, 24. Hayden Morton

Yellow Cards: Sainsbury, Griffiths

Red Cards: Nil



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Osieck names Socceroos squad for World Cup Asian Qualifier

Qantas Socceroos Head Coach Holger Osieck named a 23-player squad that will host Oman in a crucial 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifier at Stadium Australia, Sydney on Tuesday 26 March (Kick-off 7:30pm AEDT).

Tim Cahill, Mile Jedinak, Tommy Oar and Tom Rogic return to the Qantas Socceroos squad after missing last month's friendly against Romania and Dino Djulbic receives his second call-up to the Qantas Socceroos squad after making his senior international debut at the EAFF East Asian Cup qualifiers in Hong Kong last December.

Osieck has included six (6) Hyundai A-League players in Eugene Galekovic (Adelaide United), Mark Milligan (Melbourne Victory), Jade North (Brisbane Roar), Mat Ryan (Central Coast Mariners), Archie Thompson (Melbourne Victory) and Michael Thwaite (Perth Glory). The Qantas Socceroos will be without the services of Lucas Neill and Carl Valeri who will both serve one match suspensions for the accumulation of yellow cards from previous



Road To Rio: The Socceroos resume World Cup duties next week. The top two teams from the group qualify for Brazil 2014. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

matches in the tournament.

This will be the seventh meeting between the Qantas Socceroos and Oman at senior men's international level.

The most recent meeting between the Qantas Socceroos and Oman was in Muscat in June last year where

they played out a 0-0 draw in extreme heat.

The Qantas Socceroos are currently ranked 37th in the FIFA World Rankings whilst Oman are 105th (as of 14 February 2013).

The Qantas Socceroos are currently in second position of Group B of the fi-

nal round of the 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers with a win against Iraq (2-1), draws against Oman (0-0) & Japan (1-1) and a loss against Jordan (1-2) in matches. Oman are in fourth place of Group B after a win over Jordan (2-1), draws with Australia (0-0) and Iraq (1-1) and two losses to Japan (0-3 & 1-2).

The 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifier between the Qantas Socceroos and Oman will be broadcast exclusively live on FOX SPORTS HD 1 from 6.30pm (AEDT).

The exclusive free to air broadcaster SBS TV will broadcast the match on SBS One & SBS HD from 8pm (AEDT).

Group B Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
JAPAN	5	4	1	0	13	2	11	13
AUSTRALIA	4	1	2	1	4	4	0	5
IRAQ	5	1	2	2	4	5	-1	5
OMAN	5	1	2	2	4	7	-3	5
JORDAN	5	1	1	3	4	11	-7	4
Oman 0-0 Australia, Australia 1-1								
Japan, Jordan 2-1 Australia, Iraq 1-2								
Australia, Australia v Oman, Japan v Australia, Australia v Jordan, Australia v Iraq								
(Goals)								

Socceroo Squad

Mark BRESCIANO Al Gharafa QATAR 65 (12), Alex BROSQUE Al-Ain Club UAE 20 (6), Tim CAHILL New York Red Bulls USA 60 (26), Robert CORNTHWAITE Chunnan Dragons KOREA REPUBLIC 6 (3), Dino DJULBIC Al Wahda Club UAE 2 (0), Eugene GALEKOVIC (gk), Adelaide United AUSTRALIA 6 (0), James HOLLAND FK Austria Vienna, AUSTRIA 9 (0), Brett HOLMAN Aston Villa ENGLAND 58 (8), Mile JEDINAK Crystal Palace ENGLAND 37 (3), Robbie KRUSE Fortuna Dusseldorf GERMANY 22 (2), Ryan McGOWAN Shandong Luneng Taishan CHINA PR 3 (0), Matt MCKAY Changchun Yatai CHINA 34 (1), Mark MILLIGAN Melbourne Victory AUSTRALIA 19 (2) Jade NORTH Brisbane Roar AUSTRALIA 39 (0), Tommy OAR FC Utrecht NETHERLANDS 6 (0), Tom ROGIC Celtic SCOTLAND 4 (0), Mathew RYAN (gk) Central Coast Mariners AUSTRALIA 2 (0), Mark SCHWARZER (gk) Fulham ENGLAND 104 (0), Archie THOMPSON Melbourne Victory AUSTRALIA 46 (28), Michael THWAITE, Perth Glory AUSTRALIA 10 (0), Luke WILKSHIRE FK Dinamo Moscow, RUSSIA 74 (8), Rhys WILLIAMS Middlesbrough ENGLAND 11 (0), Michael ZULLO FC Utrecht NETHERLANDS 10 (0). Caps (Goals)

Match Details

2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifier
Qantas Socceroos v Oman
Tuesday 26 March 2013
Stadium Australia, Homebush
Kick-Off: 7:30pm AEDT

Ticket Prices – Single Match Tickets
Category A - \$95 all tickets
Category B - \$65 Adult, \$35 Concession, \$165 Family
Category C - \$40 Adult, \$20 Concession, \$95 Family
Australian Active Area - \$45 Adult, \$25 Concession

Ticket Prices – 10% Discount – General Public 2 match pass
Category A - \$171 all tickets
Category B - \$117 Adult, \$63 Concession, \$297 Family
Category C - \$72 Adult, \$36 Concession, \$171 Family

Australian Active Area - \$81 Adult, \$45 Concession

Ticket Prices are inclusive of GST & Booking Fee. Transaction and credit card fees apply.

For more information, please visit www.footballaustralia.com.au/tickets

SHORT PASSES

Integrated ticketing announced for Oman clash

Football Federation Australia, Sydney Olympic Park and Stadium Australia announced that all tickets to the 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifier between the Qantas Socceroos and Oman at Stadium Australia on Tuesday 26 March will include entry and return travel on CityRail trains, Sydney Olympic Park Major Event Bus Services, regular Sydney Buses (STA), Liverpool to Parramatta T-way buses and Sydney Ferries services.

With the match coinciding with the Royal Easter Show, which is taking place throughout Sydney Olympic Park, fans should plan their journey and travel early to ensure they are in their seats before the match gets underway. Fans are also encouraged to leave the car at home and take advantage of the additional and direct public transport services available for the event.

CityRail will operate regular and direct services between Central and Olympic Park, along with connecting services between Lidcombe and Olympic Park stations.

Sydney Olympic Park Major Bus services are operating on 11 major bus routes across Sydney.

Sydney Buses will also operate to a regular weekday timetable. Route 525 operates between Parramatta and Burwood via Sydney Olympic Park.

adidas Charity Strip raises over \$10,000 for Life Flight

The adidas-Wellington Phoenix Charity Strip used in the game against Adelaide United on 24 February has raised over \$10,000 for Life Flight.

Wellington Phoenix General Manager David Dome said the Club was pleased that the association has again raised valuable funds for a worthwhile charity. The strips were auctioned on TradeMe with the online auction site refunding all success fees back to the charity. \$8,704 was raised through the auction of the strips, with another \$1,903 being raised in a collection on game day meaning over ten and a half thousand dollars was raised in total.

Bridges re-signs for Jets

10 goals.

"I'm delighted to be able to spend another season playing at the Jets," Bridges said.

"My family and I are very happy in Newcastle and we love the lifestyle here, so it's great to settle down and have my future sorted."

The 34-year-old said he has never felt fitter and is confident he can continue to be a big contributor to the Jets both on and off the park.

"I'm my biggest critic and I've said since day one of pre-season that I've never felt this fit, never felt this strong," Bridges said.

Thankfully I got the chance to show that. I'm playing better football and looking leaner and fitter than I was when I arrived three years ago.

"Hopefully I can pass on some wisdom and some knowledge and help bring our younger players along."



Adama Traore Out For A Month

Melbourne Victory Football Club can confirm that Adama Traore will be sidelined for at least the next three to four weeks, although the extent of the damage to his injured ankle is yet to be fully determined.

The 23-year-old was stretchered off in the 65th minute of Saturday night's 1-all draw with Brisbane Roar.

While x-rays showed there was no fracture, an MRI revealed a high-ankle ligament tear. Traore and the club's medical staff will meet with a surgeon tomorrow to determine the best course of action.

Melbourne Victory Coach Ange Postecoglou said the news was extremely disappointing.



"There's no doubt that Adama has been fantastic for us this season and he's been an integral part of our defensive structure," Postecoglou said.

"We're hopeful that Adama

won't require surgery and that he'll be back before the end of the season, but if he does need an operation his rehabilitation will obviously be longer.

"While we're very disappointed for Adama, this setback will provide an opportunity for someone else to step-up in his absence."

Traore joins injured midfielder Gui Finkler and defender Nick Ansell on the sidelines, although the latter started running again this week in a bid to be fit for the finals series also.

Galekovic rewarded with Socceroos call up

Adelaide United FC captain Eugene Galekovic's stellar form between the posts has been rewarded with selection in the Qantas Socceroos squad for the upcoming World Cup qualifier against Oman in Sydney on March 26.

The Reds' inspirational shot stopper was one of three goalkeepers named in Qantas Socceroos Coach Holger Osieck's 23-player squad for the match, Galekovic joined by veteran Mark Schwarzer and Central Coast Mariners custodian Mathew Ryan.

Despite not being a stranger to national team selection, which included being part of Australia's 2010 World Cup squad in South Africa, Galekovic admits he was somewhat surprised to be given the call up to the squad for such a big game.

"I was a little bit (surprised) considering all of the players from Europe and the Middle East were coming back, so it's a surprise but I'm happy to go to Sydney and meet up with the boys," Galekovic said after the announcement this morning.

To date, Galekovic has made four appearances and recorded two clean sheets for the Qantas Socceroos, and while he knows Schwarzer is likely to be given the nod against Oman, he is relishing the opportunity to go into camp and put his best foot forward.

The prospect of possibly going to another World Cup is also an incentive for the 31 year old, who knows if he continues to focus on doing well between the posts for Adelaide United, he will be in the mix.

"It's always good to go there and try to prove yourself, and if something does pop up in the near future then you have something in Holger's mind that you have a

chance," Galekovic said.

"Getting a sniff now it gives you that feeling that you're in with a chance again, but it's about performing every week for your club and if you do that, hopefully the coach picks the players that deserved to be picked."

On his selection, the dual Hyundai A-League Goalkeeper of the Year also paid credit to Reds Goalkeeper Coach Peter Blazincic, who has worked with Galekovic since he arrived in Adelaide in 2007.

"Since I've been here Peter Blazincic has helped me a lot, he's one of the top goalkeeping coaches in the country and credit goes to him as well," Galekovic said.

Galekovic's call up means he will miss the Reds' match against the Central Coast Mariners on Sunday 24 March, although the Mariners will also be without their number one keeper Ryan.

Galekovic will fly out to Sydney to join the Qantas Socceroos squad on Monday.



Eugene Galekovic leads out Adelaide United on Monday night.

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VICTORIA'S LEADER IN TEAM WEAR

SCOREBOARD

TABLE

		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	West Sydney Wanderers	24	16	2	6	34	19	15	50
2	Central Coast Mariners	24	13	6	5	43	21	22	45
3	Melbourne Victory	24	12	4	8	42	39	3	40
4	Adelaide United	24	12	3	9	36	33	3	39
5	Sydney FC	24	9	3	12	38	46	-8	30
6	Newcastle Jets	25	8	6	11	29	41	-12	30
7	Brisbane Roar	24	8	5	11	28	27	1	29
8	Perth Glory	24	8	4	12	24	26	-2	28
9	Melbourne Heart	24	8	3	13	29	33	-4	27
10	Wellington Phoenix	25	6	6	13	27	45	-18	24

THIS
WEEK

ROUND 25
 Fri Mar 15 Adelaide United v Newcastle Jets
 Sat Mar 16 Melbourne Heart v West Sydney Wanderers
 Sat Mar 16 Sydney FC v Melbourne Victory
 Sun Mar 17 Central Coast Mariners v Brisbane Roar
 Sun Mar 17 Perth Glory v Wellington Phoenix

VENUE
 Hindmarsh Stadium
 AAMI Park
 Allianz Stadium
 Bluetongue Stadium
 nib Stadium

LOCAL
 7:00pm
 5:30pm
 7:45pm
 5:00pm
 4:00pm

AEDT
 7:30pm
 5:30pm
 7:45pm
 5:00pm
 7:00pm

NEXT
WEEK

ROUND 26
 Sat Mar 23 Wellington Phoenix v Newcastle Jets
 Sat Mar 23 Melbourne Victory v Perth Glory
 Sat Mar 23 West Sydney Wanderers v Sydney FC
 Sun Mar 24 Brisbane Roar v Melbourne Heart
 Sun Mar 24 Adelaide United v Central Coast Mariners

VENUE
 Westpac Stadium
 AAMI Park
 Parramatta Stadium
 Suncorp Stadium
 Hindmarsh Stadium

LOCAL
 5:00pm
 5:30pm
 7:45pm
 4:00pm
 6:30pm

AEDT
 3:00pm
 5:30pm
 7:45pm
 5:00pm
 7:00pm

ROUND 24 RESULTS

Brisbane Roar 1 (Franjic 59)
 Melbourne Victory 1 (Broxham 10)

Crowd: 12,624 @ Suncorp Stadium

Crowd 10,807 at Hunter Stadium

Sydney FC 2 (Ryall 25, Chianese 73)
 Central Coast Mariners 0

Crowd: 16,155 @ Allianz Stadium

Melbourne Heart 0
 Adelaide United 2 (Vidosic 40p, Ramsay 53)
 Crowd: 5,393 @ AAMI Park

Newcastle Jets 1 (Taggart 45)
 Perth Glory 2 (Cordoba 24, Thwaite 90)



TOP GOAL SCORERS

- 15 - Daniel McBREEN (Mariners)
- 14 - Jeremy BROCKIE (Phoenix)
- 12 - Marco ROJAS (Victory)
- 12 - Besart BERISHA (Roar)
- 12 - Alessandro DEL PIERO (SFC)
- 9 - Emile HESKEY (Jets)
- 9 - Ryan GRIFFITHS (Jets)
- 9 - Mark BRIDGE (Wanderers)
- 9 - Dario VIDOSIC (Adelaide)
- 7 - Mark MILLIGAN (Victory)

While the Wellington Phoenix wallow at the foot of the table, striker Jeremy Brockie continues his rise on the scorer's charts, and another effort against Wanderers sees the Kiwi join Daniel McBreen at the top of the tree.

Compiled by
Steven Talevski

Star Man

Terry Antonis
Sydney FC



It's not usual that a central midfielder gets this award, but the youngster sure did deserve it. Antonis was solid when defending but also a real threat in attack which was highlighted when he assisted Joel Chianese for Sydney's second. Antonis looks set to have a major role in Sydney attempting to cement a spot in the finals.

A-LEAGUE TEAM OF THE WEEK Round 24



GK: Eugene Galekovic – Adelaide's number one was the pick of the bunch this week in the goalkeeping department after making two crucial saves early in the game off Nick Kalmar and Josip Tadic strikes.

RB: Jerome Polenz – The German was in fine form against the Phoenix and played a crucial role in Shinji Ono's opener.

CB: Adam Griffiths – Leaking goals has been a major problem for the Sky Blues this season, however this was overturned this weekend as Griffiths stared in the centre of defence.

CB: Michael Thwaite – With Socceroos selection this week, Thwaite threw his name back into the ring after a superb performance for the Glory in their away win against Newcastle.

LB: Rhyan Grant – Playing on the left side of defence this week, Grant helped stabilise the Sydney defence as they managed to keep title contenders Central Coast goalless.

RW: Ivan Franjic – Moved into midfield this week, Franjic was as influential in an attacking sense with his runs down the right wing. His willingness to attack led to the Roar equalising through his strike early in the second half.

RCM: Leigh Broxham – Broxham managed to get himself on the score sheet after a stunning leap that saw him header the ball into the back of the net as the Victory managed to walk away from Suncorp Stadium with a draw.

CM: Mateo Poljak – After being clobbered by the ball early into the game, Poljak managed to play all 90 minutes as the Wanderers extended their lead on top of the table.

LCM: Terry Antonis – With Socceroos manager Holger Osieck in the crowd, the youngster had one of his best performances in a Sky Blue shirt and played a major role in Sydney's second goal which essentially sealed the game.

LW: Mark Bridge – The Western Sydney attacker found himself on the score sheet once again scoring the winner against Wellington.

ST: Jeremy Brockie – His goal away to the Wanderers put him equal first with Daniel McBreen on the A-League goal scoring charts, and could have been the sole leader as he found the wood work late in the game.

Coach: Frank Farina – An impressive two nil victory saw Sydney FC move into fifth position on the table. Since taking over Sydney, Farina has had ups and downs, but the victory against the Mariners saw him put out a team that was defensively stable and a real threat in attack.

Thank God It's Friday... GW is available at all good newsagents every Friday



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Newcastle Jets



1

Perth Glory



2

Match Details

Newcastle Jets 1 (Taggart 45')
 Perth Glory 2 (Cordoba 24', Thwaite 90+3)
 At Hunter Stadium
 Crowd: 10,807
 Referee: Adam Kersey

Newcastle Jets: 2. Scott Neville, 5. Dominik Ritter, 7. James Brown (17. James Virgili 63'), 8. Ruben Zadkovich (c), 11. Connor Chapman, 12. Joshua Brillante, 15. Craig Goodwin, 19. Michael Bridges, 20. Mark Birighitti (gk), 21. Marko Jesic (26. Andrew Hoole 84'), 22. Adam Taggart
 Substitutes not used: 1. Ben Kennedy (gk), 25. Mitch Cooper

Yellow Cards: nil
 Red Cards: nil

Perth Glory: 1. Daniel Vukovic (gk), 2. Jack Clisby, 9. Shane Smeltz, 10. Liam Miller, 12. Ryo Nagai, 14. Steven McGarry, 17. Chris Harold (13. Travis Dodd 58'), 18. Matias Cordoba (7. Jacob Burns 53'), 19. Joshua Risdon, 21. Scott Jamieson, 23. Michael Thwaite (c)

Substitutes not used: 8. Dean Hefernan, 30. Lewis Italiano (gk)

Yellow Cards: Nagai 44', Jamieson 89'
 Red Cards: nil

Thwaite's Late Winner Keeps Glory In Finals Hunt

By Shaun Dyas

Perth Glory had their star goalkeeper Danny Vukovic to thank as they escaped Hunter Stadium with a 2-1 win against the Newcastle Jets.

The crowd of 10,807 was treated to a superb performance from the Perth custodian as he continually kept Newcastle at bay with a string of superb saves, underlining his undoubtedly quality.

Michael Thwaite hit the winner deep into stoppage time from a Perth corner which kept the visitors' chances of a finals spot alive. Matias Cordoba and Adam Taggart were also on target in a match the home side dominated in every department except on the scoreboard.

Perth is now equal sixth on the A-League ladder and has drastically enhanced their chances of playing finals football. The Jets on the other hand are still in fifth but have played two more matches than their nearest rivals.

Earlier, Newcastle looked destined to score in the 4th minute. A cross was whipped in wide from the right and was headed down by Craig Goodwin straight to the feet of Michael Bridges. He squared a superb pass to Adam Taggart who shot from six yards only to see an inspired Danny Vukovic tip the ball over the cross bar.

Perth gave away a free kick in the 10th minute and the Jets should have again taken the lead. Captain Ruben Zadkovich bent in the free kick which found an unmarked Connor Chapman only six yards from goal. Chapman will never have a better opportunity to open his A-League account as he sent the golden chance wide and Perth escaped again.

Against the run of play it was the Glory who took the lead in the 24th minute, making Newcastle pay for their wastefulness. Chris Harold was released down the right flank for the Glory and cut back a brilliant ball to the feet of Argentine import Matias Cordoba. He beat



Michael Thwaite scores at the death for Perth Glory to keep the finals hopes of the Western Australian side alive.

Photo: PETER NEVILLE

a desperate Marko Jesic before rifling a shot past Mark Birighitti into the net from the edge of the area.

Newcastle was again left rueing what should have been an equaliser in the 33rd minute. Craig Goodwin slipped a pass out wide to Zadkovich who crossed directly to the feet of English Striker Michael Bridges. He touched to control the ball and then proceeded to blaze over from 12 yards with the goal at his mercy.

The Jets deservedly equalised right on the stroke of half time. Marko Jesic picked the ball up in the hole and drove at the heart of the Glory. He slipped a pass

through to former Glory player Adam Taggart. He punished his old club with an unerring right footed strike that nestled perfectly in the bottom corner, leaving Vukovic with no chance. In truth, the shot had to be that accurate as Vukovic was playing superbly.

Both coaches' instructions seemed to work at the interval as both sides came out much more structured and organised, ensuring space was at a premium. Michael Bridges was starting to become more influential, dropping into space and releasing players at will which led to a corner.

Vukovic excelled himself again in the 61st minute from the corner.

Goodwin played in a sumptuous delivery that was partially cleared before falling to Dominik Ritter at the back post. His first time volley was only kept at bay by the fingertips of the Perth gloveman and away for a corner via the bar.

James Virgili almost scored his first A-League goal in the 68th minute. The ball was played over the top and the youngster used his blinding speed to get to the ball before Perth left back Scott Jamieson. His shot flew over the cross bar to the relief of Perth Gloveman Vukovic.

By this stage the home side were really beginning to dominate possession and territory and

Match Stats	
1	Saves
7	Attempts on target
10	Attempts off target
49%	Possession
12	Corners
0	Offsides
12	Fouls committed

it seemed only a matter of when the goal would come. The Glory goal was under constant pressure and was only surviving through a mixture of poor finishing from the Jets and some superb keeping by Vukovic.

Newcastle's only danger was the possibility that they may switch off at the back and Shane Smeltz fired a warning shot with a header late in the second half.

The Jets failed to heed the warning and now have a nervous wait to see if they will still be in a position to qualify for the finals.

Man of the Match
 Danny Vukovic
 (Perth Glory)



Steven McGarry shows his relief at hearing the final whistle.

Photo: PETER NEVILLE



Perth Glory keeper Danny Vukovic guards his goal in true Man of the Match fashion.

Photo: PETER NEVILLE

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Sydney FC

2



CC Mariners

0



Match Details

Sydney FC 2 (Sebastian Ryall 25, Joel Chianese 73)

Central Coast Mariners 0

Allianz Stadium

Referee: Jarred Gillet

Crowd: 16 155

Sydney FC: 20. Vedran

Janjetovic, 2. Sebastian Ryall, 7. Brett Emerton, 8. Adam Griffiths, 10. Alessandro Del Piero, 13. Tiago Calvano, 15. Terry McFlynn (22. Ali Abbas '91), 17. Terry Antonis, 23. Rhyan Grant, 26. Peter Triantis, 29. Joel Griffiths (16. Joel Chianese '69).

Subs Not Used: 1. Ivan Necevska, 21. Yairo Yau.
Yellow Cards: Terry McFlynn 72.

Central Coast Mariners:

1. Mathew Ryan, 2. Daniel McBrein, 3. Joshua Rose, 4. Pedj Bojic (5. Zachary Anderson '61), 6. Patrick Zwaanswijk, 7. John Hutchinson, 9. Berni Ibini, 14. Michael McGlinchey, 16. Trent Sainsbury, 18. Nick Montgomery (Oliver Bozanic '61), 21. Mile Sterjovski (19. Mitchell Duke '57).

Sub Not Used: 20. Justin Pasfield.
Yellow Cards: John Hutchinson 70.

Sky Blues Dent Mariners Premiers Plate Hopes

By Adrian Deans

Sydney FC moved back into fifth place and claimed a sixth straight home victory after a comprehensive 2-0 win over the Central Coast Mariners at Allianz Stadium.

Goals to Sebastian Ryall and Joel Chianese helped Sydney make it back-to-back wins over the Mariners in front of a healthy home crowd of 16,155.

Sydney FC coach Frank Farina made three changes to the side with the injured Lucas Neill, suspended Fabio and Ali Abbas replaced in the starting side by Tiago Calvano, Ryall and Terry Antonis.

Tiago stepped in and contributed to an assured defensive performance for the home side, Antonis played one his best matches in a Sky Blue shirt and Ryall came up with the opening goal.

Sydney looked the most dangerous in the first half after a cagey opening and produced a string of chances, to the delight of a boisterous home crowd.

A clever change of direction from Alessandro Del Piero created space for Joel Griffiths in the 7th minute, but his cross flashed across the face of goal. Terry McFlynn then tried his luck from range, but his shot flashed over the bar.

Brett Emerton had the best opportunity of the opening period in the 10th minute after some brilliant lead up work from Del Piero, but his shot was blocked by a scrambling Josh Rose.

The home side looked solid in defence, with the Mariners reduced to a few half-chances, the best of which fell to Pedj Bojic in the 22nd minute but he sprayed his shot wide.

Ryall broke the deadlock three minutes later with a fierce shot that deflected off the Mariners'



Match Stats	
1	Saves
6	Attempts on target
7	Attempts off target
40%	Possession
5	Corners
2	Offsides
9	Fouls committed
2	2
3	8
60%	60%
8	1
8	8

Sydney FC dent the Mariners' Premier Plate aspirations and exact some revenge on a 7-2 loss inflicted back in November. Photo: ALI ERHAN

Trent Sainsbury after some nice lead up work from recently re-signed skipper McFlynn.

Michael McGlinchey forced his way through on goal in the 36th minute but his deflected shot fell tamely into the arms of Sydney keeper Vedran Janjetovic.

Sydney continued to stifle the Mariners in the second half, and by the 60th minute coach Graham Arnold had seen enough, emptying his bench in search of a goal.

Despite the Mariners' fresh legs, the Sydney defence stood

tall as the visitors threw numbers forward in a desperate attempt to claim something out of the match.

The best chance for the Central Coast came in the 62nd minute when Mariners defender Trent Sainsbury spurned sent a header over the crossbar with an empty net.

Del Piero then had the fans on their feet again, cleverly cutting inside Josh Rose, but his wicked shot was saved brilliantly by Ryan.

Sydney doubled their lead in

the 73rd minute when substitute Chianese scored his first goal of the season, finishing clinically past Matt Ryan after a brilliant one-two with Antonis.

The Mariners continued to have the better of possession, but most of that came in their own half as the Sky Blues defended well as a unit to ensure the visitors couldn't convert it into genuine chances.

McBreen had a chance to pull one back with full time approaching, but his lofted touch flew over the crossbar with just

the keeper to beat.

Chianese had a chance to double his tally late in injury time, but his lobbed shot fell just wide of the upright.

Sydney will look to extend their unbeaten home run to seven next Saturday when they take on Melbourne Victory at Allianz Stadium. Kick off for that match is at 7.45pm

Man of the Match

Adam Griffiths
(Sydney FC)



Sydney FC keeper Vedran Janjetovic comes out to collect with a handsome save.
Photo: ALI ERHAN



Sydney FC players mob Sebastian Ryall after his goal added to the Mariners' recent Premiers Plate woes. Photo: ALI ERHAN



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Brisbane Roar**1****Melbourne Victory****1****Match Details**

Brisbane Roar 1 (Franjic)
 Melbourne Victory 1 (Broxham 11')
 Saturday, 9 March
 Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane
 Referee: Peter Green
 Crowd: 12,624

Brisbane Roar: 1. Michael Theo (Gk), 3. Shane Stefanutto, 5. Ivan Franjic, 7. Besart Berisha, 9. Stefan Nijland (10. Henrique 75'), 13. Jade North, 14. Steven Lustica (17. Mitch Nichols 60'), 15. James Donachie, 18. Luke Brattan, 19. Jack Hingert (11. Ben Halloran 75'), 22. Thomas Broich

Substitutes Not Used: 20. Matt Acton
 Yellow Cards: Luke Brattan 63', Ben Halloran 90+3'
 Red Cards: Nil

Melbourne Victory: 3. Adama Traore (21. Spase Dilevski 67'), 5. Mark Milligan, 6. Leigh Broxham, 10. Archie Thompson, 11. Marco Rojas, 14. Billy Celeski, 23. Adrian Leijer (C), 31. Scott Gallaway, 32. Connor Pain (22. Jesse Makarounas 90'), 33. Daniel Mullen, 39. Nathan Coe (Gk)

Substitutes Not Used: 1. Tando Velaphi (Gk), 26. Andrew Nabbout
 Yellow Cards: Mark Milligan 60',
 Adrian Leijer 84', Leigh Broxham 90+1
 Red Cards: Nil

Roar and Victory Share Spoils In Quality Clash

By Jarrod Ellis

Melbourne Victory gathered some measure of revenge for their heavy early season defeat to Brisbane Roar at Suncorp Stadium, playing out a 1-1 draw with the hosts at the same venue on Saturday night.

The draw means Ange Postecoglou is yet to secure three points against his former side. The presence of their former manager once again seemed to bring the best from the mean in orange, turning in a second half performance that showed they can still pose a threat should they creep into the finals.

In what was a hard fought match a draw was the right result on the night, but Brisbane will no doubt be the unhappier of the two teams as the single point leaves the Roar just outside of the finals places.

Surprise wins for Perth and Sydney had put the onus on the home side to take all three points and maintain their spot in the top six.

Melbourne on the other hand was under less pressure, three points ahead of Adelaide United and eight points behind the Wanderers. With the Reds form only able to be described as "erratic" at best Ange Postecoglou's men seemingly have little to play for ahead of the finals.

Berisha forced Nathan Coe into the first save of the match eight minutes in, a penetrative high ball from Stefan Nijland found the Albanian racing into the box but Berisha was unable to loop his header over the Victory keeper.

In contrast Leigh Broxham didn't waste his headed chance only a minute later.

Broxham leapt spectacularly to meet a lofted cross from Archie Thompson, heading the ball into the top corner of Michael Theo's goal.

The Brisbane defence was caught



Leigh Broxham is elated with his goal as Connor Pain joins in the celebrations. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

ball watching, allowing Thompson to dwell on the box and for Broxham to arrive late into the box unmarked for a towering header.

Thompson had the home supporter's hearts in their mouths a little later, finding space in the Brisbane penalty area only to slip before getting a shot off, thwarted by a pitch left in atrocious condition brought about by seemingly three weeks worth of constant rain and the previous night's NRL match.

Victory very nearly had a second on 28 minutes, Billy Celeski heading a ball down for Mark Milligan but the resultant shot flashed wide of the far post.

A second should have arrived four minutes later, this time only a wonderful reaction save from Theo was enough to keep out a poked effort from Daniel Mullen, the Victory defender having found himself on the back post for a Marco Rojas free kick.

Theo was called into action once again shortly before halftime, this time getting down well to save a shot from Thompson after the striker was played into the penalty box by Rojas.

Brisbane's efforts in the Victory half of the pitch were finally rewarded fifteen minute into the second half. A superb outside foot pass from Luke Brattan back on

the halfway line unleashed Ivan Franjic down the right, the converted right-back stormed into the box and placed his shot between the legs of Coe.

The goal brought Brisbane to life, the home team surged forward and what looked a likely goal to Nijland was wasted after another poor cross, a recurrent problem for the Roar on the night.

Brisbane continued to surge forward as the half wore on, the introduction of Mitch Nichols added some impetus to the Brisbane attack and the Victory defence were sitting increasingly deep.

Thompson had a quality chance to put his side ahead in the 78th

Match Stats	
3	Saves
4	Attempts on target
10	Attempts off target
52%	Possession
7	Corners
8	Offsides
15	Fouls committed
3	48%
4	2
3	3
11	11

Man of the Match
Leigh Broxham
 (Melbourne Victory)



Ivan Franjic scores a blistering goal and pulls the Roar level. Besart Berisha can't contain his jubilation. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE



Ben Halloran lets out a yell as and Leigh Broxham and Spase Dilevski hunt in pairs. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

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Wanderers Pull 5-Pts Clear In Premiers Plate Chase

West Sydney

2

By FFA

Western Sydney tightened their grip on a debut minor premiership with a hard-fought 2-1 win over Wellington Phoenix on Sunday evening.

It took two penalty kicks to separate the sides who are poles apart on the A-League ladder, and all but consigns the Phoenix to their second wooden spoon in their six year history.

The Wanderers fans – who staged a silent protest for the opening twenty minutes of the match in support of banned members – might have been forgiven for expecting an easier ride. Their side, after all, were on an A-League record-equalling eight match winning run, while their opponents had won only twice in 2013.

In the only change for the visitors, interim coach Chris Greenacre was forced to omit Stein Huysegems after the Belgian was sent off in last weekend's 1-0 win against the Heart in Dunedin. His place in the lineup was taken by Spaniard Dani Sanchez, who was replaced on the dugout by Isaka Cernak.

On the other bench, Tony Popovic replaced Iacopo La Rocca and Dino Kresinger in the starting lineup with Aaron Mooy and Labinot Haliti respectively. The side were otherwise unchanged from that which claimed top spot with a win in Gosford last weekend.

And after seven minutes they were on their way. Phoenix left-back Tony Lochhead's clumsy challenge on Youssouf Hersi as he exchanged a neat one-two with Jerome Polenz was a clear foul, and Shinji Ono converted from the spot, to subdued celebrations from the Red and Black Bloc.

The hosts could have doubled their lead soon after; first Labinot Haliti dragged a left-footed shot wide of Glen Moss' goal before



Shinji Ono makes no mistake from the spot, much to the delight of Mark Bridge. Photo: GREG SEATON

Ono blazed over from eight yards after Wellington captain Andrew Durante failed to deal with a Haliti cross.

But almost exactly as the fans at Parramatta Stadium found their voice, the Phoenix found their goal. A long free-kick from near half way found its way to Leo Bertos at the back post, who delivered a centre for leading striker Jeremy Brockie to prod into an empty net.

Say what you will about the Phoenix's woes this campaign, Brockie has undoubtedly been a bright spark and now sits atop the golden boot standings with Daniel McBreen with just two games to play.

Wellington arguably matched

their opponents blow for blow in the first half, but their discipline was their undoing just one minute into the second spell.

This time it was Vince Lia guilty of inexplicably handling the ball as it was crossed from the right. Lia, who is among a number of Phoenix players whose future at the club is under serious doubt, has under-performed this season and the hand-ball was clearly deflating for a side that had just begun to grow in confidence.

With Ono benched at half-time after sustaining an injury, Mark Bridge was left to calmly score his ninth goal of the season from the penalty spot.

Haliti, Bridge and Nikolai Topor-Stanley ought to have added to

the lead throughout the second half but were thwarted by a mixture of misfortune, last-ditch defending and solid goalkeeping from Moss, who has been let down by his defenders in recent weeks.

In the final minute of normal time they were nearly punished by Brockie. Brockie's goals this season have been a blend of tappings and extravagant efforts, and he nearly scored one of the latter as he smartly turned and volleyed his left-footed effort onto Ante Covic's crossbar, with the goalkeeper left stranded.

But there was to be no miracle escape for the Phoenix, who slump to yet another away loss in a season that, frankly, cannot end

soon enough for new coach Chris Greenacre.

They will have to reassess for a trip to Perth next weekend that could award them the wooden spoon before the season has even ended.

But Tony Popovic's men are now just five points from securing top spot in a dream campaign that has gone from strength to strength.

It would take a brave wager to bet against the run being extended to double digits as the side travel to Melbourne next weekend to take on the Heart.

Man of the Match

Jerome Polenz
(Wanderers)

Wellington Phoenix

1
Match Details

Western Sydney Wanderers 2 (Ono 5p, Bridge 48p)

Wellington Phoenix 1 (Brockie 22)

Crowd: 15,809 @Parramatta Stadium

Wanderers: 1.Ante Covic, 3.Adam D'Apuzzo, 4.Nikolai Topor-Stanley, 5.Michael Beauchamp, 6.Jerome Polenz, 7.Labinot Haliti (14.Kwabena Appiak-Kubi 68'), 8.Mateo Poljak, 10.Aaron Mooy, 17.Youssouf Hersi (18.Iacopo La Rocca 90'), 19.Mark Bridge, 21.Shinji Ono (9.Dino Kresinger 45').

Yellow Cards: Poljak

Red Cards: None

Wellington Phoenix: 20.Glen Moss, 2.Manny Muscat, 3.Tony Lochhead, 7.Leo Bertos, 8.Paul Ifill (15.Louis Fenton 81'), 11.Jeremy Brockie, 17.Vince Lia, 18.Ben Sigmund, 21.Dani Sanchez (4.Isaka Cernak 81'), 22.Andrew Durante, 23.corey Gameiro (12.Tyler Boyd 69').

Yellow Cards: Durante

Red Cards: None



After Shinji Ono left the field with a hamstring sprain, Mark Bridge took over penalty duties and duly doubled the lead. Photo: ALI ERHAN



It's a three-way tie for the ball between Dino Kresinger, Youssouf Hersi and Tony Lochhead. Photo: GREG SEATON



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Melbourne Heart

MELBOURNE
HEART

0

Adelaide United



2

Match Details

Melbourne Heart 0
Adelaide United 2 (Dario Vidosic 40', Iain Ramsay 53')
Venue: AAMI Park, Melbourne
Referee: Chris Beath
Attendance: 5,393

Melbourne Heart: 20. Andrew Redmayne, 4. Simon Colosimo, 8. Matthew Thompson, 10. Josip Tadic (36. Eli Babaj 57'), 11. Richard Garcia 15. David Williams, 16. Marcel Meeuwis (5. Fred 46'), 18. David Vrakovic, 21. Jamie Coyne (14. Golgo Mebrahtu 68'), 22. Nick Kalmar, 25. Jeremy Walker

Unused substitutes: 1. Clint Bolton
Yellow cards: Simon Colosimo 68', Richard Garcia 80'
Red cards: Nil

Adelaide United: 1. Eugene Galekovic, 3. Nigel Boogaard, 4. Jon McKain, 5. Iain Fyfe, 6. Cassio, 8. Marcelo Carrusca (22. Fabio Ferreira 82'), 10. Dario Vidosic, 14. Cameron Watson, 17. Iain Ramsay (18. Fabian Barbiero 88'), 19. Jake Barker-Daish, 25. Tomi Juric (21. Jeronimo Neumann 74').

Unused substitutes: 20. Paul Izzo
Yellow cards: Iain Ramsay 33, Jon McKain 41', Tomi Juric 64', Eugene Galekovic 77', Nigel Boogaard 81'
Red cards: Nil.

By Roy Hay

After an exciting start in which the home team could have scored several goals, Melbourne Heart eventually succumbed to a workmanlike Adelaide United, losing by two goals to nil at AAMI Park on Labour Day.

With the defeat came the realisation that it will take a miracle for Heart to make the finals this year since it has games against the top two teams in its remaining three matches.

Heart left out Patrick Gerhardt, Jonathan Germano and Jason Hoffman, while Adelaide had virtually its strongest line-up with perhaps the exception of Bruce Djite. Josip Tadic returned to the starting line-up for Heart and Marcel Meeuwis was preferred to Fred.

The first twenty minutes of the game were open and frenetic with chances galore at both ends. Adelaide hit the frame of the goal twice, Kalmar might have had a hat-trick but for the brilliance of Eugene Galekovic in the Adelaide goal. In the second minute Tomi Juric fired in a blistering shot which Andrew Redmayne at full stretch deflected against the post and away to safety. Jeremy Walker was causing havoc down the right side and from his cross Josip Tadic headed goalwards and when the ball was rebounded Nick Kalmar thrashed it over the bar. A minute later Walker's pass found Kalmar directly and his fierce shot was finger-tipped around the post by Galekovic. In the next attack Kalmar just dragged his shot wide of the post. Adelaide replied as Dario Vidosic shot narrowly over. United then had a good spell in which they denied Heart the ball for long periods, but finally David Williams got clear down the left and his cross just eluded a diving lunge by skipper Matt Thompson, who was thus denied a goal on his 200th A-League game. Adelaide



Dario Vidosic made no mistake with his penalty-kick to give the South Australians the lead. Photo: ANITA MILAS

went up the other end and Vidosic struck the junction of the bar and post with a shot from more than 20 metres.

The match then took a decisive turn when Adelaide mounted an attack down its left flank. Jeremy Walker raised his foot to clear the ball and made contact with Marcelo Carrusca and the referee gave a penalty converted by Dario Vidosic in the 40th minute. Heart had a brief flurry in the last minutes of the first half, but the closest they came to a goal was a David Williams free kick which was headed away for what turned out to be a fruitless corner kick.

Most people expected a Heart response in the second half and Fred replaced Meeuwis at the interval. But Adelaide nipped any revival in the bud with a second goal after 53 minutes. Cassio, Carrusca and Iain Ramsay were involved in a move down the left which allowed Ramsay to fire across Redmayne and into the far corner of the net. It was a goal which could and should have been prevented. Adelaide were now in total control as Heart gave the ball away repeatedly and then had to chase the game for significant periods, which John Aloisi later identified as one of the major failings of his team in this match. Eli

Babaj replaced Tadic and when Jamie Coyne fell awkwardly and had to leave the field Golgo Mebrahtu came on in his place. This should have given Heart more attacking firepower but neither made much impression with the few opportunities they had.

Adelaide absorbed early Heart pressure then started to play. After that Heart were never really threatening and in the end it was a most comfortable win for Adelaide. Michael Valkanic noted that Adelaide players had been in a comfort zone assuming that they were bound to make the finals, but some inconsistent performances have made them



realise that they all have to buckle down to get the results they seek.

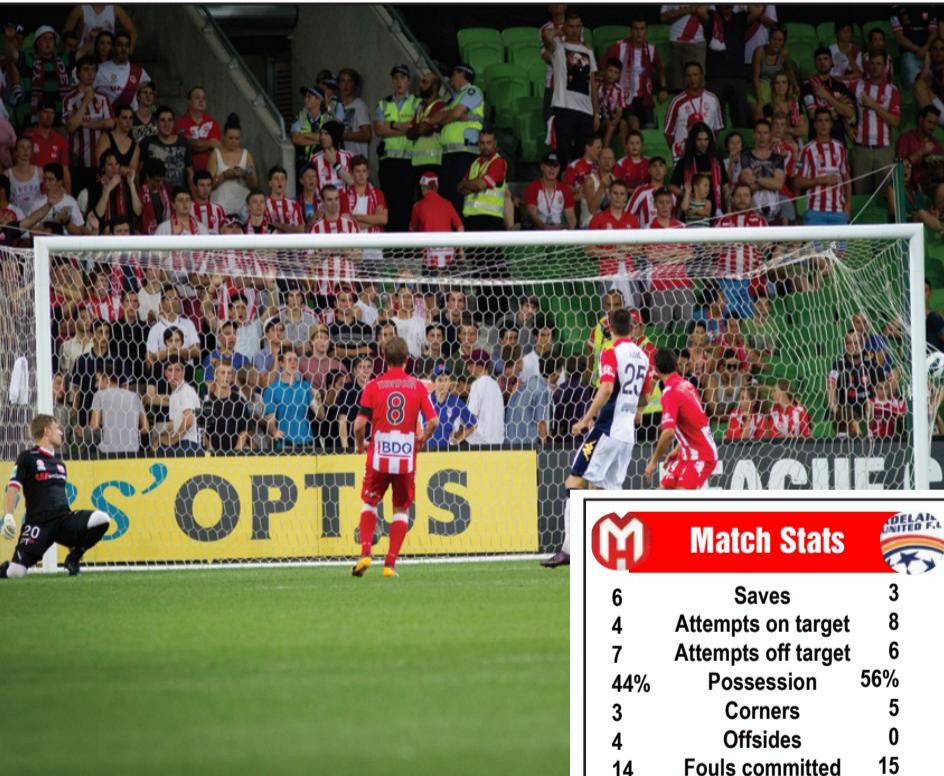
John Aloisi quite rightly identified this as one of the most disappointing effort by his squad this season, but insisted that he and the team would move on and try to lift for the tough encounters coming up. What is certain is that Heart is going to have to be more ruthless when it gets chances to score early and much more resilient should it go behind.

Man of the Match

Eugene Galekovic
(Adelaide United)



Referee Chris Beath is on hand to implement some law and order amid bodiers sprawled and appeals aplenty. Photo: ANITA MILAS



Iain Ramsey's (out of picture) effort leaves Heart keeper Andrew Redmayne stranded. Photo: ANITA MILAS

Match Stats	
6	Saves
4	Attempts on target
7	Attempts off target
44%	Possession
3	Corners
4	Offsides
14	Fouls committed
	56%
	5
	0
	15

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Goal Weekly - Friday 15th March 2013

9

PICS OF ROUND 24



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Picture Page



This cub Roar fan flies the flag for the Orange Army.
Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE



Victory coach Ange Postecoglou looks pretty comfortable in familiar surrounds at Suncorp. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE



It's standing room only as Wanderers fans pack it in at Parramatta Stadium. PHOTO: GREG SEATON



It's been a good week for Michael Thwaite, who celebrated his winner with a Socceroo call-up.
Photo: PETER NEVILLE

The Yellow Fever on tour make their point as they enjoy sights and delights of Western Sydney. Photo: GREG SEATON



Adelaide United fans enjoy their long weekend away in Melbourne.
Photo: ANITA MILAS



Graham Arnold and Frank Farina etch another battle in their long history of their encounters.
PHOTO: ALI ERHAN



Dario Vidosic strokes the ball home against Heart.
Photo: ANITA MILAS



Adelaide Utd Line Up

- 1.Eugene Galekovic (gk) (c)
- 3.Nigel Boogaard
- 4.Jon McKain
- 5.Iain Fyfe
- 6.Cassio
- 8.Marcelo Carrusca
- 10.Dario Vidosic
- 11.Bruce Djite
- 14.Cameron Watson
- 17.Iain Ramsay
- 18.Fabian Barbiero
- 19.Jake Barker-Daish
- 20.Paul Izzo (gk)
- 21.Jeronimo Neumann
- 22.Fabio Ferreira
- 25.Tomi Juric (One to be omitted)

Ins: Bruce Djite (returns from injury)

Outs: Nil

Unavailable: Osama Malik (ankle)



Heart Line Up

1. Clint Bolton
3. Cameron Edwards
4. Simon Colosimo
5. Fred
6. Patrick Gerhardt
8. Matt Thompson
9. Dylan Macallister
10. Josip Tadic
11. Richard Garcia
13. Jonatan Germano
14. Golgo Mebrathu
15. David Williams
16. Marcel Meeuwis
17. Jason Hoffman
18. David Vrankovic
19. Ben Garuccio
20. Andrew Redmayne
21. Jamie Coyne
22. Nick Kalmar
25. Jeremy Walker
36. Eli Babalj
- (Six to be omitted)

Ins: 3. Cameron Edwards, 6. Patrick Gerhardt, 9. Dylan Macallister, 13. Jonatan Germano, 17. Jason Hoffman, 19. Ben Garuccio

Outs: Nil

Unavailable: 23. Mate Dugandzic (broken foot – season)



Adelaide United v Newcastle Jets

Fri Mar 15 Hindmarsh Stdm 7:30pm

By Matt Mays

It's all about the building of confidence and getting ready for the finals now for Adelaide United after their first win in seven away trips in Melbourne secured their top four spot. Whilst Newcastle are still in the hunt when they visit Hindmarsh on Friday night.

With just 2 games left to play for the Jets, this is a must win game, as they only find themselves one point ahead of Brisbane, two ahead of Perth and three ahead of Heart, whom all have one game in hand respectively. The Jets welcome back former Red Zenon Caravella as he returns from injury, which head coach van Egmond cherishes.

"I think Zenon helps with our build-up in controlling the game and getting the ball forward. He'll be coming straight back into the starting lineup."

But the Hindmarsh crowd with not get to see marquee Emile Heskey as he is still struggling with a calf strain. Taylor Regan is also available after coming back from suspension. It doesn't get much bigger than this for the Jets. Failure to win at Hindmarsh will leave them facing the daunting task of beating potential Champions Western Sydney on the final day, whilst hoping for others to them a favour. Maybe an advantage for Newcastle is Adelaide can perhaps take the foot of the gas? Not a chance.

The Reds will now be setting their sights on third place and pip interstate rivals Victory. Adelaide will be full of confidence after last week's win, especially Dario Vidosic, who finally netted for the first time in 2013. Valkanis said



Referee: Lucien Laverdure

Head-to-Head

Played 24
Adelaide 9
Jets 7
Drawn 8

Join the conversation on Twitter using the hash-tag #REDSvJETS

Finals-bound Reds Prepare For Desperate Jets

ABC Radio Coverage: Grandstand Digital Adelade & online

The Odds

AUFC 1.95
Draw 3.60
Jets 4.00

it was vital the team won in preparation for the last couple of games. "I've always had belief in the group and we can see how the boys are responding and how hard they're working."

New boy Jake Barker-Daish could be in line for his second consecutive start after an impressive debut, while Fabio Ferreira is eager to get back into the starting lineup after his injury comeback.

Also Bruce Djite might be fit, making the Reds injury table almost empty going into the business end of the season.

There was more great news for Adelaide this week as skipper Eugene Galekovic has been called up to the Socceroo squad for their World Cup Qualifiers.

The Reds have yet to concede a goal against the Jets this season, after an opening day 2-0 victory at Hunter Stadium, followed by a 0-0 draw in January at the same venue.

Going into the game though the teams are relatively well matched. Adelaide has just won 2 of their last 8 games in the league, whilst the visitors have the same record.

With finals football now confirmed, Adelaide will now be able to play without pressure. Despite Newcastle playing for their season, their record at Hindmarsh is particularly poor, picking up just twice in their last 12 visits. So with a full, confident squad, Adelaide should breeze to victory.

Twitter: @mattahoo87

Kiss of Death
Adelaide 3-0 Jets

As A Matter Of Fact

These teams last met in early January, however neither club could break away from a 0-all draw

Adelaide United FC have scored 22 goals at home this season whilst conceding only 13, coincidentally winning 8 of their 12 games at Hindmarsh Stadium

Fabian Barbiero is the only current Adelaide United player to have scored more than a single goal against Newcastle in previous iterations of this fixture

Newcastle Jets have won just twice from twelve games at Hindmarsh Stadium, conceding 19 goals in the process

Newcastle Jets are poised to lose three games in a row at the worst time of the season for the first time since Round 11 this season



Jets Line Up

1. Ben Kennedy (gk)
2. Scott Neville
3. Zenon Caravella
5. Dominik Ritter
7. James Brown
8. Ruben Zadkovich
10. Bernardo Ribeiro
11. Connor Chapman
12. Josh Brillante
14. Taylor Regan
15. Craig Goodwin
17. James Virgili
18. Jacob Pepper
19. Michael Bridges
20. Mark Birighitti (gk)
21. Marko Jescic
22. Adam Taggart
25. Mitch Cooper
26. Andrew Hoole (Four to be omitted)

Ins: Zenon Caravella (returns from injury), Taylor Regan (returns from suspension)

Outs: Nil

Unavailable: Ben Kantarowski (knee), Emile Heskey (calf), Sam Gallaway (knee)

Melb Heart v West Syd Wanderers

Sat Mar 16 AAMI Park 5:30pm

By Andrew Bishara

There are always repercussions when a team loses. For the Melbourne Heart, the fallout to its spiritless loss to Adelaide United, its second consecutive loss in a row could be the most severe. It is now in danger of missing out on the finals, unless it claims the nine points left in the season. Yet the fight and urgency in the previous performances are nowhere to be seen.

"We haven't won coming from behind yet this season. When things are going well, and they have been at home, we're probably one of the best teams to watch," Heart coach John Aloisi admitted after the game.

"When we went a goal down, the team's heads dropped too easily. That was disappointing because that's happened quite a few times this year."

That's a surprising factor, considering that the Heart have an impudent home record. Everyone is well aware that their away form has been dreadful to say the least. The problem is so evident that Aloisi admitted that unless his side conquers their away fears, they don't deserve to be in the finals.

"We had been winning at home on a consistent basis, but we had made it hard on ourselves by not picking up points away from home. Now we have to turn that around. Win at home next week and then pick up points away from home," said Aloisi. The task for the Heart gets even harder as they welcome the elected Premiers, the Western Sydney Wanderers at AAMI Park. On the back of nine consecutive victories in a row,

Join the conversation on Twitter using the hash-tag #MHvWSW #HarmonyGame

The Odds

Heart 3.40
Draw 3.50
WSW 2.17

Heart hoping for finals revival

Referee: Ben Williams

the Wanderers are the league's inform side. Few would have thought that Tony Popovic would lead the Wanderers to such a position at the start of their first season. The Wanderers will get a home final, regardless of what happens in the weeks ahead. Yet Popovic is not one to rest on his laurels, admitting that despite Central Coast Mariners boss, Graham Arnold saying that the race for the Premiership Plate is over, Popovic doesn't believe it.

"While it's mathematically possible of course they're still in contention.

If they weren't we'd be celebrating right now," said Popovic, following the win over Wellington. "There's three games to go and we're only five in front so we've still got a job to do and that group of players definitely

knows that."

It's moments like this in football that spring a surprise. Making ten wins on the bounce would be an enormous effort, especially considering just how short the A-League season is, but perhaps Popovic and his Wanderers would prefer a slip-up now, as opposed to losing the semi-final. Aloisi and the Heart are fighting for their season now. They understand that they will have to play out of their skins and hope for some dominos to fall their way. Starting off with a win over the favourites would be start, but it probably won't be good enough to match the Wanderers. A tight draw to settle the account.

Kiss of Death
Heart 1-1Wanderers

ABC Radio Coverage : 774 Melbourne & Local Radio Victoria, Grandstand Digital Melbourne & online

Head-to-Head

Played 2
Melb Heart 0
Wanderers 2
Drawn 0



As A Matter Of Fact

A Shinji Ono penalty goal in the 73rd minute gave the Wanderers a 1-0 victory when they last clashed with the Heart on Australia Day 2013

Western Sydney Wanderers will be looking for a clean sweep against the Melbourne Heart, coming off 2-1 and 1-0 wins earlier in the season

The Wanderers are yet to play the Heart in Melbourne, but have notched up a win in their only previous match in the Victorian capital (def. Victory 2-1, 16-Feb-2013)

On average, Western Sydney have outshot Melbourne Heart 21-12 in previous encounters

Melbourne Heart have lost 100% of their games when conceding the first goal of the match (11 games)

Wanderers Line Up

1. Ante Covic (GK)
2. Shannon Cole
3. Adam D'Apuzzo
4. Nikolai Topor-Stanley
5. Michael Beauchamp
6. Jerome Polenz
7. Labinot Haliti
8. Mateo Poljak
9. Dino Kresinger
10. Aaron Mooy
11. Tarek Elrich
13. Joey Gibbs
14. Kwabena Appiah-Kubi
15. Reece Caira
16. Rocky Visconte
17. Youssouf Hersi
18. Iacopo La Rocca
19. Mark Bridge
20. Jerrad Tyson (GK)
21. Shinji Ono
23. Jason Trifiro
25. Josh Barresi (Seven to be omitted)

Ins: 2. Shannon Cole, 13. Joey Gibbs, 15. Reece Caira, 16. Rocky Visconte, 23. Jason Trifiro, 25. Josh Barresi (all promoted)

Outs: Nil

Unavailable: 12. Tahj Minniecon (foot season)



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Glory Line Up

- 1.Danny Vukovic (gk)
- 2.Jack Clisby
- 3.Steve Pantelidis
- 6.Nick Ward
- 7.Jacob Burns
- 8.Dean Heffernan
- 9.Shane Smeltz
- 10.Liam Miller
- 11.Adrian Zahra
- 12.Ryo Nagai
- 13.Travis Dodd
- 14.Steven McGarry
- 15.Brandon O'Neill
- 16.Evan Berger
- 17.Chris Harold
- 18.Matias Cordoba
- 19.Josh Risdon
- 21.Scott Jamison
- 22.Ndumba Makeche
- 23.Michael Thwaite
- 28.Daniel De Silva
- 30 Lewis Italiano (gk) (Seven to be omitted)
- Ins: 5.Steve Pantelidis (returns from injury), 6.Nick Ward, 11.Adrian Zahra, 15.Brandon O'Neill, 16.Evan Berger, 22.Ndumba Makeche 28.Daniel De Silva
- Outs: Nil
- Unavailable: 24. Storm Roux (international duty – New Zealand U-20), 26.Riley Woodcock (Young Socceroos camp), 27.Matthew Davies (Young Socceroos camp)

Perth Glory v Wellington Phoenix

By Joe Gallagher

If Perth Glory are to make a run to the finals series this season, the visit of Wellington Phoenix this weekend is simply a must-win.

The visitors, who sit dead last and must travel the width of the continent in the longest domestic road trip in world football, are now consigned to spending the rest of the season spoiling the parties of the sides above them.

And while that might not seem an overly lucrative proposition, the prospect – albeit slim – of avoiding the wooden spoon will be at the forefront of interim coach Chris Greenacre's mind as he takes on the difficult task of motivating the Phoenix for the final two matches of the season. The two may be final two fixtures with the club.

He can take some heart from the goals shown in a 2-1 loss to high-flying Western Sydney on Sunday evening. It took two penalties to separate the sides, and while Wellington were the second best side on the day, they dominated for patches and showed unmistakable glimpses of promise.

They have on their side the league's equal-leading scorer in Jeremy Brockie, who will no doubt have his own personal ambitions to usurp Daniel McBreen at the top of the goalscoring charts. He may be accompanied by Stein Huysegems in the starting eleven, who returns after serving a one-match suspension.

In Perth they find an opponent that will be high on confidence and even higher on ambition, after a last-gasp



Head-to-Head

Played 19
Perth Glory 7
Phoenix 8
Drawn 4

Join the conversation on Twitter using the hash-tag #PGvNIX

The Odds

Glory 1.62
Draw 3.90
Phoenix 6.50

ABC Radio Coverage :
Updates only

Glory Strives For Finals in Must-Win

As A Matter Of Fact

When these teams last met in early February, Jeremy Brockie sealed the 1-0 win for the Phoenix with a goal late in the first half

Perth Glory have won six of nine matches against the Phoenix at nib Stadium

Wellington Phoenix are on the verge of an unwanted A-League record, should they lose it would be their 8th consecutive loss away from home

Shane Smeltz has scored five goals in the history of this fixture, three for Wellington and two for Perth, and is the only current Perth Glory player to have scored more than one goal against the Phoenix

Jeremy Brockie continued his scoring run on the weekend, giving himself the opportunity to score for the fifth consecutive game this weekend

Kiss of Death
Glory 1-1 Phoenix

A-League season must be extended

A-League Rewind



By Robert Di Fabio

Socceroos boss Holger Osieck has named his 23-man squad for Australia's crucial World Cup Qualifier against Oman later this month, however much of the focus in the media conference was seemingly in relation to the length of the A-League season, and the competition's failure to recognise international breaks on the football calendar.

A frustrated Osieck reiterated his desire to see the Australian domestic competition extended, pointing out to the extended lay-off between the end of the finals series in April, and Australia's three vital World Cup Qualifiers in June.

The Australian coach revealed he had recently held discussions with A-League boss Damien De Bohun about the league's programming, however he isn't too confident his sentiments will be taken on board.

"(De Bohun) came to see me and

wanted to get some input," Osieck said about the scheduling. "So far I haven't seen any changes."

Unlike previous years, A-League players are now in serious consideration for national team call-ups, as evidenced by Osieck's recent squad for this month's qualifier, naming six A-League players in his squad.

For this very reason, it becomes a bigger conundrum when the A-League regular campaign culminates at the end of March, with the final series concluding three weeks later.

For players, like Socceroos captain Lucas Neill – who recently signed a short-term stint with Sydney FC – it provides a complex situation, with the possibility of no competitive football for 7-10 weeks leading into the June qualifiers.

With the weight of expectation firmly on Osieck, it makes his task of picking a fit, match-conditioned squad the more difficult.

"My major concern is how do we fill the space between the end of the A-League and the upcoming qualifiers in June," he said.

"The break in the A-League is way too long and it's about time people really reconsider and restructure the A-League dates. Right now it is definitely not very acceptable."

Osieck raises some valid points.

While these current circumstan-

ces may have been acceptable in the infant stages of the A-League, the competition has now matured in many areas on and off the pitch. It's time for football to stop worrying about the other codes, and look at what's best for our game. Enough is enough. From next season, the A-League must respect football protocol and have a break on international dates. It may have been acceptable in previous seasons – when the bulk of the Socceroos' representatives plied their trade in Europe – although now, as illustrated in recent months, many players from the A-League are realistically in contention for the national team.

Unlike predecessor Pim Verbeek, Osieck believes the A-League has a realm of talent at its disposal, and can contribute towards the national team's journey towards Brazil 2014.

"People have to learn that despite the importance of the A-League, football is an international game and the Socceroos combine the entire country," he said.

"They have to be number one here and everything that is possible to accommodate the team, in order to make people happy, has to be done."

"I mean the A-League, in all fairness, it's a club business, club interests, you have your supporters they follow your team but the Socceroos are followed by all

Australians."

If the A-League does recognise international breaks from next season, the length of the season should be extended by around a month – assuming there isn't an increase in midweek fixtures. While there wouldn't be an increase in competitive matches, this method would somewhat aid in increasing the length of the season. Additionally, clubs who have players selected for the national team won't be unfairly disadvantaged on the pitch, as we've seen on several occasions this season.

In relation to increasing the number of competitive matches per season, realistically this will only occur once FFA decides to lift the lid on its expansion process. However, we may need to wait another four or five years, as no new franchises are anticipated to enter the league in the short-term future. It's highly doubtful that teams will play each other four times per season – with three already a little repetitive given there are only 10 teams in the competition.

Thus, in the short-term, the only other option for more competitive fixtures is, if the proposed FFA Cup is introduced. Given the constant delays on this national cup blueprint, let's not get too excited.

Follow Robert on Twitter @
RobertDiFabio

Hyundai Goal for Grassroots

Congratulations to Springfield United FC for being selected as the Hyundai Goals For Grassroots junior club for Round 24. By virtue of Brisbane Roar scoring 1 goal this round, the club received a \$2000 grant courtesy of Hyundai.

To nominate your club visit www.goalsforggrassroots.com.au

Gatt Calls For More Recognition

Etihad Stadium may be the best overall for members of the fourth estate, but Bluetongue Stadium has the best food! At least that's what 132 media representatives who participated in a survey of the Football Media Association (FMA) said in a recent survey of venues and facilities.

"Journalists and reporters who cover A-League matches have variable working conditions and access to facilities depending on which stadium they're at," said FMA President, Ray Gatt of The Australian.

"Overall, the survey showed that the best stadium from a working media perspective is Etihad Stadium in Melbourne."

Gatt said the factors covered included the standard of media facilities, space allocations, technology requirements, catering and refreshments, media conference facilities and helpfulness of A-League club staff. "Etihad rated highest on all measures except catering which, of course, is also something very dear to the stomachs of working media as games tend to be played around meal times."

"A lot of attention is rightly paid to the working conditions of players and team staff on game day, but it's also an important consideration for FMA members and other working media who are critical to helping to promote and build the competition."

He said that FMA will take up some of the issues raised direct with stadium or club management, as relevant, during the A-League off season.

"As the A-League reaches higher and higher standards on the field, it is important that venues, FFA and clubs also start to match it with off field issues as well."

"This survey gives us a good body of evidence to have constructive dialogue to help improve the level of access and amenity at our weekend workplaces," said Gatt.

He added that another interesting aspect of the survey was the status of employment of working media.

"It's no surprise that less than half are in full time paid employment with a media organisation (42%) but what is striking is the large proportion of people who are in unpaid roles."

Gatt said that 41% who provide coverage of the game are in unpaid roles, while 17% are either part time or casual employees.

"FMA believes it is essential that FFA and A-League clubs recognise the legitimate and important contribution this large unpaid, part time and casual workforce makes to the game also."

"It is particularly important as more and more 'news' is 24/7 and online. Traditional news, promotion and coverage sources are not the only sources. Not only are there more and more independent digital football news sites, but non-football media is also providing greater coverage of the game."

"One of the issues we intend pursuing with FFA in the off-season is greater access to media accreditation for some of the writers, broadcasters and photographers in these categories," Gatt said.

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Phoenix Line Up

1. Mark Paston (GK)
2. Manny Muscat
- 3.Tony Lochhead
4. Isaka Cernak
7. Leo Bertos
8. Paul Ifill
10. Stein Huysegems
11. Jeremy Brockie
14. Ian Hogg
17. Vince Lia
18. Ben Sigmund
20. Glen Moss (GK)
21. Dani Sanchez
22. Andrew Durante (C)
23. Corey Gameiro

Ins: 10. Stein Huysegems (returns from suspension), 14. Ian Hogg (promoted)

Outs: 12. Tyler Boyd (international duty), 16. Louis Fenton (international duty)

Unavailable: 12. Tyler Boyd (international duty), 16. Louis Fenton (international duty), 19. Jimmy Downey (knee – indefinite)



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IGA NSW NPL Launches in Style

The official 2013 IGA NSW National Premier Leagues was launched in the presence of the Men's and Women's National coaches Holger Osieck and Hesterine de Reus and Hyundai A-League coaches Frank Farina from Sydney FC and Western Sydney Wanderers' Tony Popovic.

Reinforcing the outcomes of the National Competition Review, the goal to grow and strengthen Australia's strongest State based league, the new IGA NSW NPL is leading the nation with greater investment in coaching resources, facilities and competition best practice.

A strong coaches panel that consisted of Qantas Socceroos coach Holger Osieck, Westfields Matildas coach Hesterine de Reus, FFA's National Technical Director Han Berger, were accompanied by twenty-four club representatives from both the elite NSW men and women's competitions mingled with the media at the launch.

Football NSW CEO Eddie Moore said, "The NSW Premier League has long been the foundation of producing Australia's elite football talent – both players and Coaches. With the new initiatives and standards introduced under the NPL guidelines, the elite program and competitions in NSW will continue to provide all the National squads with the talent and experience to grow in both men's and women's football."

In building this new model in partnership with the FFA, Football NSW and the Premier clubs, the value, importance and strength of the IGA NSW NPL will see this a landmark day for the development of football in NSW and the nation.



FFA CEO David Gallop confirmed, "Our elite competitions have long been the engine room producing some of Australia's finest footballers as well as coaches which will continue to progress in the right direction under the new IGA NSW National Premier Leagues."

"Today's launch of the National Premier Leagues model gives our competition the status and organisational structure it deserves."

"Apart from the hot bed of talent we see week in week out at the highest level in this state, a strong emphasis has been placed on the quality of coaching which has now further enhanced via the NPL."

The NPL model will bring national guidelines for the state and territory elite club competitions for the first time.

The key features of the NPL are;

- A common Nationally recognised brand and logo
- Qualified Technical Directors at each club

- Consistent player pathways in each state and territory

- Player Points System (PPS) to encourage youth development

- Revised Compensation System to reward clubs producing A-League players

- Improved finance and business planning under a club licensing scheme

During the course of the launch an "IGA Charity Shootout" took place with players and special guests throwing their support as money was raised for the Queensland Floods appeal.

The IGA NSW National Premier Leagues competition kicks off this Saturday while the Women's Premier League commences on the 24th of March.

THUNDER APPEAL FINDINGS ANNOUNCED



Football Federation Australia (FFA) has announced the findings of its Appeals Committee on Dandenong Thunder's appeal from FFV's Appeals Board decision concerning misconduct at the 2012 Victorian Premier League Grand Final at AAMI Park on 14 October, which included the firing of rocket flares.

The FFA Appeals Committee made the following determinations:

- The first five competitive matches of the 2013 season for the Dandenong Thunder Men's Premier League Senior and Reserve teams be played in the absence of any Dandenong Thunder and opposition club members and supporters (excluding players) save that each club will be at liberty to allow a limit of 12 Club Associates to attend to act as coaches and necessary support staff
- The Club is fined \$40,000
- The Men's Senior Team is deducted three championship points from the 2013 Victorian Premier League season
- Prior to 30 June, all club members must undertake and complete an FFV Respect and Responsibility Course
- No Dandenong Thunder members shall be admitted to home games after the fifth competitive game of the 2013 season unless each member produces evidence of having attended the FFV Respect and Responsibility Course

FFA's Appeals Committee noted that the match was a "significant day for the VPL, and for football in Victoria generally". Notwithstanding the im-

portance of the club in the Albanian community and more generally in the Dandenong area, it said:

"This was, after all, the showcase of the game in Victoria and the behaviour of the Club's supporters was all the more appalling in that context. Further, and arguably more importantly, spectators, including many children, were put at risk of substantial personal injury by the discharging of flares, particularly rocket flares."

FFV CEO Peter Gome welcomed the decision which, he said, reinforces FFV's commitment to a Zero Tolerance policy when dealing with anti-social behaviour.

"FFV is committed to ensuring that community football matches uphold community standards and provide a safe and family-friendly environment which allows players, officials and spectators to enjoy the game," he said.

"FFV's Zero Tolerance Policy has seen a drastic reduction in overall misconduct since its implementation in 2008 and 2012 saw this trend continue.

"Only 102 matters were brought before the FFV Independent Tribunal in 2012 compared with 155 in 2011." FFV has run many Respect and Responsibility courses to help club members and supporters understand the importance of good behaviour on and off the field and the FFV Independent Tribunal has used this in conjunction with point deductions and possible relegations as an alternative to fines where appropriate.

There were only 50 instances of clubs being fined at tribunal in 2012, compared to 246 in 2011.

Stevo's Corner



By Steve Scott

Anyone doubting whether the magic of the FA Cup is alive and well need only look at one of the upcoming semi-final's taking place in mid April.

The FA Cup is the oldest association football competition in the world and was first held back in 1871-72.

The FA Cup has a long tradition of lower ranked teams becoming "giant killers".

Can either Millwall or Blackburn, the only two non Premier League clubs left in the competition claim this tag and go all the way to claiming the FA Cup? If either of these two clubs is successful in doing so, they will become the first team since West Ham back in 1980 to win the FA Cup from outside of the top division.

The way the FA Cup draw has panned out, it means this scenario is every possibility with the final taking on a David and Goliath battle in the final.

On one side of the draw we will be seeing a finalist coming the teams that currently occupy first, second and fourth spots on the English Premier League table. In what could be labelled a battle of the heavyweight's semi-final, Manchester City will face the

winner of the Quarter Final replay between Manchester United and Chelsea. Chelsea is the current defending champions and will be going all out to get back to back FA Cups. The other side of the draw will see Premier League strugglers Wigan taking on either Millwall or Blackburn, who are facing off in a Quarter Final replay.

These three teams on this side of the draw are proof that the romance and magic of the FA Cup is still well and truly alive.

Whichever of these three teams makes it through to the final to face one of the Premier League heavyweights, will be creating history for their club.

Winning their Quarter Final against Everton, and reaching the semi-finals has already written history for Wigan. This is the first time in their history that the 'Latics' have made it this far in the FA Cup.

Millwall players and fans will be hoping to at least match their clubs efforts in the 2003/04 season, when they made their one and only appearance in the final of the FA Cup. This season they would be hoping to go one step better and go all the way and win the final.

Although Blackburn have won the FA Cup six times, the club hasn't lifted the trophy for 85 years. The last time they featured in the final was back in 1960, when they lost the final 3-0 to Wolverhampton Wanderers.

FA CUP Quarter Finals

Everton 0-3 Wigan Athletic

Manchester City 5-0 Barnsley

Blackburn Rovers 0-1 Millwall

Manchester United 2-2 Chelsea

FA CUP Semi Finals

Millwall v Wigan Athletic

Man Utd/Chelsea v Man City



Wigan shocked Everton with three goals in as many minutes at Goodison Park to reach the semi finals.

Boo's World

SUMMER SERIES



By Mark Boric

Not sure which A-League clubs supporters are scheduled to stage a silent protest this week. It could be Adelaide United in solidarity with coach Michael Valkanis and his damaged-voiced Fox Sports interview. Sydney FC could fight the power over alleged police brutality at the recent Mardi Gras. Hopefully it will be Perth Glory for any reason they can come up with, to spare us from the lamest chant set in existence.

Once again the FFV were able to boast about the success of their Zero Tolerance Policy on

anti-social behaviour. Interim CEO Peter Gome was quoted during the week as stating "FFV's Zero Tolerance Policy has seen a drastic reduction in overall misconduct since its implementation in 2008 and 2012 saw this trend continue. Only 102 matters were brought before the FFV Independent Tribunal in 2012 compared with 155 in 2011." It has been that successful that perhaps the FFA should consider implementing it. Massive fines to clubs and the docking of competition points could just about bring an end to the pitch invasions, flare usage and seat smashing that has seen many "active" supporters banned recently. Will the FFA start taking more drastic action?

On the flip side, as Mr Gome begins to further examine the size of the FFV's financial black hole, the other stat he revealed may spark a light bulb: "There were only 50 instances of clubs being fined at tribunal in 2012, compared to 246 in 2011." To emulate AC/DC and get back in black, that figure may have to increase this season.

I had a look at the Team FFV website of Board Election candidate Kimon Taliadoros and was



Just like their Victory counterparts the week before, Wanderers fans let their banners do the talking. Phot: ALI ERHAN

instantly confronted with one of the major problems in the current administration of the game. A graphic outlining the structure of the proposed Team FFV. On the top left, there was the FFV Board, labelled as Team Manager with the job description of Governing. On the top right is the FFV Executive & Administration,

labelled as the Coach and with the job description of Organising. Below these groups, are the FFV Members, labelled Player's - YOU!!! with the job description of playing, obviously enough. So what's missing? How about the FFV Members who have paid millions in affiliation fees that give them no rights whatsoever, the

Clubs? They could have the job description of - Paying!

Clubs continue to get weaker, and with the lack of support from the governing bodies it is little wonder. I doubt the current regime think this is a problem, as it has been largely engineered by them. For how much longer will volunteers put up with having to pay for it?

AGAINST ALL ODDS

A-League Champion 2012/13

West Sydney Wanderers	2.62
Central Coast Mariners	3.10
Melbourne Victory	5.50
Adelaide United	12.00
Sydney FC	13.00
Brisbane Roar	15.00
Perth Glory	23.00
Newcastle Jets	41.00
Melbourne Heart	41.00
Wellington Phoenix	00.00



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Top row (from left to right): Iain Fyfe, Nigel Boogaard, Antony Golec, Daniel Bowles, Dario Vidosic, Osama Malik.

Middle row: Sean Tagg (High Performance Manager), Peter Blazincic (Goalkeeper Coach), Bruce Djite, Jon McKain, Cameron Watson, Paul Izzo, Sergio van Dijk, Evan Kostopoulos, Marcelo Carrusca, Michael Valkanis (Assistant Coach), John Kosmina (Head Coach).

Front row: Cassio, Fabian Barbiero, Jeronimo Neumann, Eugene Galekovic, Jake Barker-Daish, Iain Ramsay, Zenon Caravella, Jacob Melling, Teehooy Kamara.

Couch Potato



* ALL TIMES ARE AEDT

one

Tuesday 19th March
08:30 am Liverpool TVFriday 22nd March
07:30 am Liverpool TVSETANTA
SPORTS

FRIDAY 15TH MARCH

UEFA Europa League Round of 16 2nd Leg

Inter Milan v Tottenham 4:50am **LIVE**

UEFA Europa League Round of 16 2nd Leg

Chelsea v Steaua Bucharest 6:55am **LIVE**

UEFA Europa League Round of 16 2nd Leg

Newcastle v Anzhi 9:45am 1st Airing

UEFA Europa League Round of 16 2nd Leg

Lazio v Stuttgart 12:15pm 1st Airing

Copa Libertadores Second Stage

Matchday 5 Nacional v Boca Juniors 2:45pm 1st Airing

UEFA Europa League Round of 16 2nd Leg

Highlights Show 7:00pm 1st Airing

SATURDAY 16TH MARCH

Bundesliga Round 26 Preview Show 5:55am 1st Airing

Bundesliga Round 26 Wolfsburg v Fortuna 6:25am **LIVE**

Blue Square Premier Forest Green v Mansfield 8:30am 1st Airing

SPL Round 31 Motherwell v Hibernian 10:20am 1st Airing

Copa Libertadores Second Stage

Matchday 5 Highlights Show 7:00pm 1st Airing

Scottish Division 3 Round 30 Elgin v Rangers 11:40pm **LIVE**

SUNDAY 17TH MARCH

npower Championship Round 38 Charlton v Millwall 2:05am 1st Airing

npower Championship Round 38 Derby v Leicester 8:20am 1st Airing

Eredivisie Round 27 PSV v RKC 10:10am 1st Airing

Bundesliga Round 26 Dortmund v Freiburg 12:00pm 1st Airing

Bundesliga Round 26 Leverkusen v Bayern Munich 1:50pm 1st Airing

SPL Round 31 Dundee United v Dundee 10:55pm **LIVE**

MONDAY 18TH MARCH

Scottish League Cup Final Hearts v St Mirren 1:55am **LIVE**

Primera Division Round 6 Teams TBC 7:20am 1st Airing

Primera Division Round 6 Teams TBC 9:10am 1st Airing

Eredivisie Round 27 Ajax v AZ 3:20pm 1st Airing

Bundesliga Round 26 Monchengladbach v Hannover 5:10pm 1st Airing

Bundesliga Round 26 Highlights Show 7:00pm 1st Airing

Bundesliga Round 26 Frankfurt v Stuttgart 10:50pm 1st Airing

TUESDAY 19TH MARCH

Eredivisie Round 27 Feyenoord v Utrecht 3:00am 1st Airing

npower Championship Round 38 Highlights Show 7:00pm 1st Airing

SPL Round 31 Highlights Show 7:30pm 1st Airing

Eredivisie Round 27 Highlights Show 8:00pm 1st Airing

WEDNESDAY 20TH MARCH

npower League One Round 39 Yeovil v Swindon 6:40am 1st Airing

FRIDAY 22ND MARCH

World Cup Qualifier UEFA Israel v Portugal 11:35pm **LIVE**SBS ONE
Sunday March 17th
10:30 am Football Asia
11:00 am UEFA Champions League MagazineMonday March 18th
4:30 pm FIFA Futbol Mundial
11:00 pm The World GameSaturday March 23rd
10:45 am 2014 FIFA World Cup Qualifier: Argentina v Venezuela **LIVE** from El Monumental Stadium, Buenos Aires, ArgentinaSBS TWO
Monday March 18th
9:30 pm The World GameENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE **LIVE**
Times listed are 7 minutes prior to kick-offs.

English Premier League

Sat Mar 16 Everton v Manchester City

11:38 pm Fox 3

Sun Mar 17 Swansea v Arsenal

1:53 am Fox 3

Sun Mar 17 Aston Villa v QPR

1:53 am Viewers Choice

Sun Mar 17 Stoke v West Brom

1:53 am Viewers Choice

Sun Mar 17 Southampton v Liverpool

1:53 am Fox 1

Sun Mar 17 Manchester United v Reading

4:23 am Fox 3

Mon Mar 18 Sunderland v Norwich

12:23 am Fox 3

Mon Mar 18 Tottenham v Fulham

1:53 am Fox 1

Mon Mar 18 Chelsea v West Ham

2:53 am Fox 3

Mon Mar 18 Wigan v Newcastle

5:30 am Fox 2 (DELAY)

Hyundai A-League

All games **LIVE**

Fri Mar 15 Adelaide v Newcastle

7:30 pm Fox 3

Sat Mar 16 Melb Heart v Western Sydney

5:30 pm Fox 3

Sat Mar 16 Sydney FC v Melb Victory

7:45 pm Fox 3

Sun Mar 17 Central Coast v Brisbane Roar

5:00 pm Fox 3

Sun Mar 17 Perth v Wellington Phoenix

7:00 pm Fox 3

FOX SPORTS FC

Every Tuesday

8:30 pm

Round 25: ASK THE EXPERTS

THE VERDICT

Adelaide (7) Jets (0) Draw (1) - Heart (2) Wanderers (4) Draw (2) - Sydney FC (4) Victory (2) Draw (2) - Mariners (5) Roar (2) Draw (1) - Glory (7) Phoenix (0) Draw (1)

SANTO CILAURO

58

Adelaide
Draw
Sydney
CCM
Glory

Last week: 2

Adelaide
Wanderers
Sydney
Mariners
Glory

CRAIG MACKENZIE

56

Adelaide
Wanderers
Sydney
Mariners
Glory

Last week: 1

EDDIE KRNEVIC

53

Draw
Heart
Draw
Roar
Glory

Last week: 3

PETER KATHOLOS

53

Adelaide
Wanderers
Sydney
Draw
Perth

Last week: 3

ROGER SLEEMAN

62

Adelaide
Wanderers
Sydney
Mariners
Glory

Last week: 1

ANDY HARPER

51

Adelaide
Heart
Victory
Roar
Perth

Last week: 3

JOHN DOYLE

54

Adelaide
Wanderers
Victory
Mariners
Glory

Last week: 3

KISS OF DEATH

58

Adelaide
Draw
Draw
Mariners
Draw

Last week: 3

Turbulent Off-Season To Test Thunder



VPL COUNTDOWN

Club: Dandenong Thunder
Final Position Last Season: 1st (VPL Finals Series, regular season and State Knockout Cup champions)
VPL Titles: 1
Last Title: 2012
Head Coach: Chris Taylor

With under a month now until the start of the new VPL season, 2012 premiers Dandenong Thunder will be seeking to back to back titles for the first time in the clubs history. After a scintillating 2012 campaign where the club picked up the treble (The VPL regular season premiership, VPL finals series and State knockout cup) manager Chris Taylor would have only seen future glory ahead for the Thunder this season. These hopes have all but been dashed though following an incident prior to the final whistle of last seasons grand final where a flare was thrown, subsequently injuring two girls, resulting in the club has enduring the offseason from hell. As a result of the violence Football Federation Victoria have handed out their largest fine in recent history (40,000 dollars), as well as docking Dandenong 3 championship points whilst also banning thunder fans from their first 5 home matches of the season. Thunder president Cezar Jakupi has described these brutal sanctions as 'manifestly excessive' before claiming that due to "each home match being worth about 15,000 dollars" the club has "effectively been fined 115,000 dollars". Considering it costs about 200,000 dollars annually to field a top tier VPL side and with many clubs, including Thunder, having experienced financial problems in recent seasons, a fine of this

The 2013 Victorian Premier League season kicks-off on Friday 5 April.



Dandenong Thunder will be aiming to defend their Victorian NPL title this season. Photo: DANIEL FLIS

magnitude could indeed "destroy the community club". With this in mind Jakupi believes that rather than aiming for the title, the club need to be "looking at survival" as their realistic goal for the 2013 season.

Who's in?

Dandenong have made a few important signings over the off season, these include:

Matthew Park: The former Scottish Premier League midfielder will be looking to build on a relatively successful campaign in Scotland last season where he was loaned out to Second Division side East Fife for the 2011-12 season.

Luke Hopper: The former Hungerford Town striker will look to build a partnership with Thunder favourite Nate Foster with the former Swindon Town man coming straight from the lower leagues of English football.

Steven Topalovic: The former Richmond defender will add some much needed versatility to the Thunder side as well as some added depth in midfield.

Zac Walker: The young defender has already made several appearances for the Melbourne Heart

this season and will look to build on this form going into the 2013 campaign.

Griffin McMaster: The former Wellington Phoenix and Brisbane roar shot-stopper will return to the VPL this season following a stint at A-League side Wellington.

Who's gone?

As a result of the massive fines the club incurred following the 2012 season there have been various high profile losses from the 2012 first team with experienced players Luke Sherbon, Stuart Webster and Ross Thompson all moving on to Bentleigh Greens. Although there have been no more confirmed departures it is widely expected that the clubs highest earners, such as Bryan Bran and even Nate Foster may be asked to find a new club in order keep costs to an absolute minimum.

Following a tumultuous offseason and an exodus of Thunder players likely on the horizon, it is sure to be a new challenge for Thunder manager Chris Taylor who may be forced to part with some of his most senior players in order to keep the club afloat financially. But with some key signings already

made, as well as a board committed to saving the club from financial collapse, the club may still rediscover their form from last season and may push for a top six place but with all things considered, it is surely not going to be another trophy laden season down in Dandenong.

IN OTHER NEWS...

Southern Stars have signed former South Melbourne captain Ramazan Tavsanoglu from Oakleigh along with former Richmond defender Andrew Viola.

Port Melbourne have made the sensational signing of former A-League winning midfielder Kristian Sarkies from recently relegated Heidelberg United. The 26 Year old midfielder will look to push for one last A-League opportunity following a string of career threatening injuries over the past few years.

Whilst Richmond have signed former Moreland midfielder Kliment Taseski from Moreland Zebras. The former Melbourne Heart playmaker adds to an already talented squad possessing the likes of Petar Franjic and Stejan Gal.



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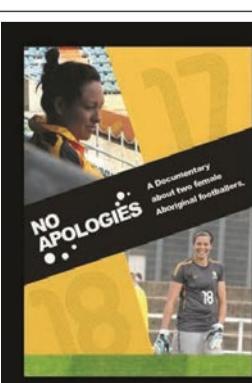
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Goal! Weekly - Friday 15th March 2013

Mullen excited by Victory's finals prospects



MACCA AT LARGE

With Craig MacKenzie

DANIEL Mullen breathed a sigh of relief when his agent John Grimaud stitched up a deal for the young central defender to get out of China and come to Melbourne Victory on loan till the end of the season.

The 23-year-old former Adelaide United star was not enjoying pre-season training with Chinese Super League club Dalian Aerbin and his relationship with coach Xu Hong was almost non-existent.

"We started pre-season training on the 5th of January and I think I spoke two words to our coach over the next five weeks," said Mullen.

"His general attitude towards the players meant that it wasn't enjoyable to be there and training was poor."

"I wanted to come back home and keep improving by training and playing at a higher standard. "That Chinese coach is gone now anyway. He actually got done a few weeks ago for match fixing and he's got a five-year ban from football."

Mullen's move to Dalian Aerbin in late June last year (for a reported \$230,000 transfer fee) came out of the blue. The South Australian had another year left on his Adelaide contract but was negotiating a new deal with his hometown club.

Dutch outfit Heracles Almelo stepped in and Mullen was set to fly to Holland until negotiations over a transfer fee broke down.

"A couple of days later the China offer came up. The move came out of nowhere really but we agreed quickly and off I went," said Mullen, who penned a two-year deal with the Liaoning province outfit.

"The standard in China is so different to the A-League which is really demanding mentally and physically, especially physically.

"If you're not 100 per cent physically when you go into a game in the A-League you're going to get found out and straight away as well."

"Before I got to China I'd had a six-week break with no training, no football, but within three days of arriving I played my first game for Dalian and walked off the pitch like I'd been training all season."

So the A-League is of a higher standard than the Chinese Super League?

"That's a difficult question. The Chinese league is very quick but not as physically demanding. I think the main difference between the leagues is the quality of imports they bring in. These players are different class."

"Just in my team alone I was playing with (former Barcelona star) Seydou Keita, Brazilian Fabio Rochenback (ex-Barca, Middlesborough and Sporting Lisbon), Nigerian international striker Peter Utaka and a boy they brought in from PSG in France, Guillaume Hoarau.

"These types of players won't come to the A-League because of the amount of money they have in China. It's ridiculous how much money they have."

"I was speaking to my mate Ryan McGowan (Shandong Luneng Taishan) who just played my team last week and his club – salary aside and win bonus aside – gave their players one million renminbi (almost \$A155,000) to split amongst themselves after winning the game."

Mullen had little problem fitting in at Dalian Aerbin and says bluntly that if Victory hadn't stepped in he'd still be in China in spite of his relationship with his now former coach.

"I actually fitted in really well to be honest. They were very accommodating. The biggest problem was the language barrier because only two of the Chinese boys in the entire squad spoke English.

"But their attitude towards me was good. They saw me as a massive bully to tell you the truth and out on the training park most of them were intimidated by me because of my size compared to them."

But the boot's been on the other foot too and Mullen knows what it's like to feel intimidated.

As a 16-year-old he was playing senior football for SA outfit Para Hills when AIS scouts came down to watch a game.

"I think the AIS scouts came out to watch my cousin Matthew and two other players. I must have had a decent game because they invited me for a trial at the AIS and I must have done okay there too because they picked me for a scholarship."

And that was when Mullen came face to face with the confronting frame of former Socceroo and then AIS head coach Steve O'Connor who is appropriately nicknamed "Rocky".

"I have to be honest. When I first got to the AIS I couldn't stand him because he was such an intimidating character."

"But I found out that he brings out the best in everyone and if you work hard for him he'll do everything he can to make sure you succeed."

"I really can't understand why he



Living The Dream: Victory's Daniel Mullen (centre) takes to the field in the 5-0 demolition of the Newcastle Jets in Round 22. Photo: ANITA MILAS

isn't involved still whether it's with the AIS or Sydney FC. He's had a massive influence on my career so far."

At the time O'Connor's AIS squad played in the Victorian Premier League and Mullen was part

I know that a lot of people in Adelaide were not supportive of my decision, which is understandable. It's the fans that make this game so great and they've got every right to share their opinion.

of a slick and elite group of young footballers.

"We had a great team and the VPL was a great competition. Near the halfway mark of our first season we were near the top of the league then we lost most of our starting 11 to A-League clubs."

The AIS was an important stepping stone for Mullen whose eventual switch to Adelaide United came about in slightly controversial fashion. It's a tale of youthful disobedience with a happy ending.

"Steve O'Connor told all of us to go back home over Christmas for a two-week holiday. We hadn't had a real break for a while so he told us not to train but importantly don't train with any A-League clubs."

"So the first day I got back home I called 'Vidi' (Aurelio Vidmar) and asked if I could train. As you

do when you're a young guy and you want to do the best you can. So I went and trained for two weeks and 'Vidi' gave me a one-year contract."

That really kick-started Mullen's professional journey. He debuted for Adelaide in its AFC Champions League semi against Uzbek outfit Bunyodkor in 2008 and soon established himself in the senior squad.

On 28 February 2009 he played in the A-league Grand Final against Victory which Adelaide lost 1-0 and a week later he made his one and only Socceroo appearance against Kuwait.

He was living the dream.

"Since as far back as I can remember I always dreamed about playing with Adelaide City in the old NSL then Adelaide United when they first got into the A-League.

"I was a big Adelaide supporter and the club holds a really special place in my heart but that's normal because Adelaide is my home.

"It's a bit like Connor Pain now with Victory. He reminds me so much of myself.

"I was his roommate on the last away trip and just the passion he has for Victory is something I can really understand.

"He said he went to every home game with his mates and he's been right amongst it with the fans and loved every minute of it.

"He reckons it's surreal to be playing for the club he loves so much and that brings back memories of how I felt when I was playing in my first year in the A-League."

Mullen's loan switch to Victory last month raised a few eyebrows. The A-League may be in just its eighth season but it's been around

long enough for some definite demarcation lines to be drawn. The Victory-Adelaide line is clearly defined.

"I know that a lot of people in Adelaide were not supportive of my decision, which is understandable. It's the fans that make this game so great and they've got every right to share their opinion.

"I had four years at Adelaide and I've seen the club go through massive changes. When I first got there we had a core group of players who really held the team together but I don't think there's anyone from that group still there.

"It's a completely different squad now and the people behind the club are different too but that's part of football. A lot of good people have left the club which is a shame."

If Mullen had anticipated a slightly frosty welcome to Victory then he would have been well off the mark.

"The Victory fans have been excellent towards me, really positive, really supportive and I'm really grateful for that.

"In terms of the club itself I can't speak highly enough of the professionalism, the facilities, the training, the coaching staff, the playing group – it's probably a step up for me which is great.

"And my (central defensive) partnership with Adrian (Leijer) is getting better with time.

"Obviously the first game I came in and we had a loss and in the second game we didn't have the understanding that was needed.

"But since then I think we have been developing quite well.

"I like playing beside him. He's a

good leader, a good captain and we're starting to find our feet together.

"Ange (Postecoglou) has big plans for this group and I'm confident that we'll have things worked out just in time for the finals. It's really exciting to be a part of this."

No doubt the excitement is also building in the Mullen family home back in South Australia.

"My family has been a massive influence in my career. Dad (SA legend Joe Mullen) has a great football background and a lot of expertise but he's never pushed me into the sport. It's always been my decision."

"Dad still talks to me after games and gives me tips on how I can improve and it's great. He's someone I can count on and I can trust."

"He's been with me through the whole journey but so has my mum, my brother and my sister."

"My sister Sophie is now 16 years old and she has never missed an A-League game that I've played in. She's my biggest fan. She has every strip that I've played in with my name on the back and she wears every one of them with pride."

"It's great to have such a supportive family."

And if any Victory fans remain sceptical about Mullen's signing I think they are about to find out what a fine young central defender they have in their ranks.

If the Melbourne giant can prize him from Dalian Aerbin's clutches at season's end then his developing defensive partnership with Leijer could well be the bedrock of future success.

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VICTORIA'S LEADER IN TEAM WEAR

Australia's first internationalists

Blast From The Past



By Roy Hay

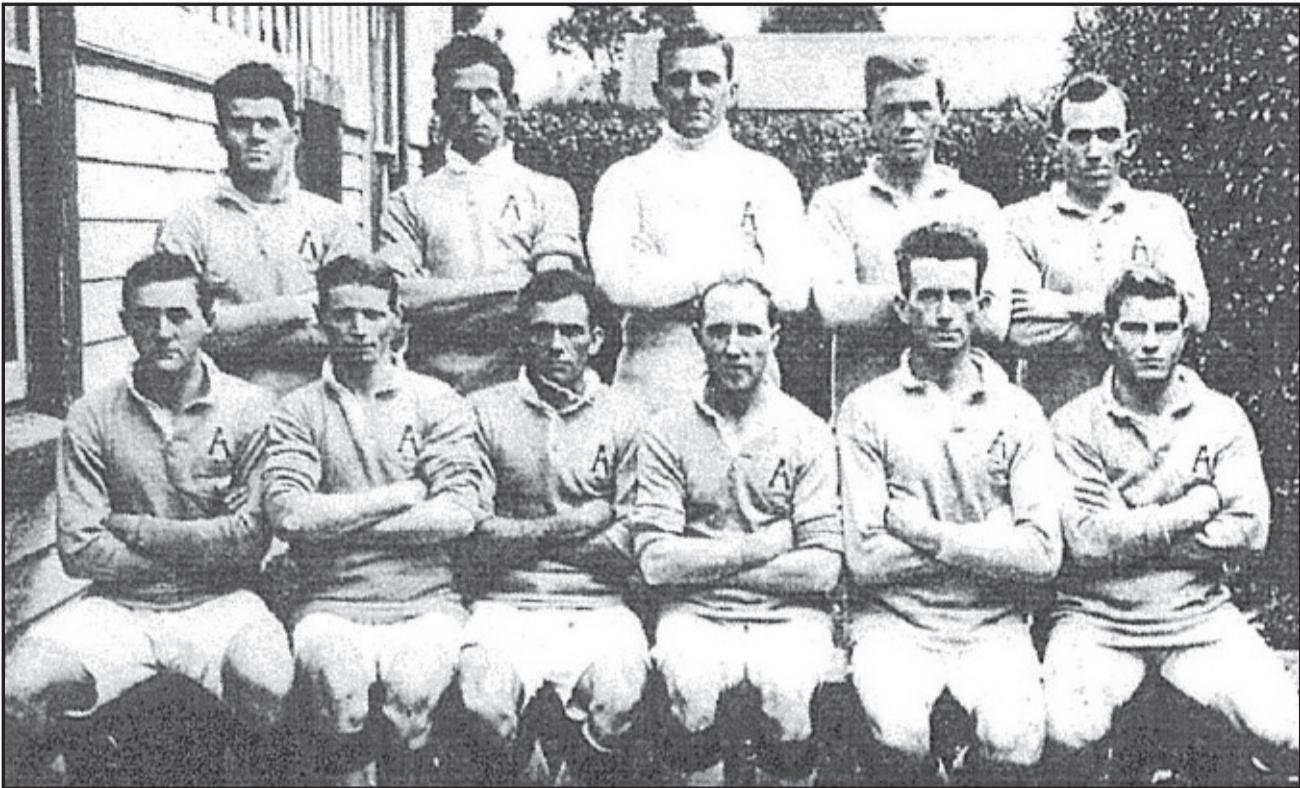
Though football had been played in Australia for nearly a hundred years before that it was not until 1922 that an Australian football team played its first international match. Or at least the first game which has been recognised as such by the current governing body of the game. That year a team consisting entirely of players from New South Wales and Queensland went to New Zealand and played 14 games including three matches which were regarded as Test Matches and hence what we would now call full international games. Prior to the tour the Commonwealth Football Association, which was in nominal charge of the game, had not sanctioned the team as Australia and it was only after the tourists returned and really by default that this became recognised as an Australian national representative team. A New South Wales team had already crossed the Tasman in 1904 while a team from New Zealand had toured parts of Australia in 1905

but it only encountered state and club or district representative sides in New South Wales.

Recently a New Zealand journalist Gavin Bertram contacted Football Federation Australia seeking pictures of the Australian team on that 1922 tour and the FFA passed on the request to me. I was able to direct him to Nick Guoth who has researched the tour and he in turn alerted Gavin to some team and action shots which originally appeared in the Otago Witness on 27 June 1922.

The Australian team which took the field at Carisbrook, Dunedin in the South Island on 18 June 1922 was George Cartwright in goal, Alan Fisher, David Cumberford, C Shenton, Peter Doyle, Bill Mauder, William Dane, Jock Cumberford, Alex Gibb, captain, David Ward and Tom Thompson. The Australians played in a very light blue strip and the New Zealanders in black with a silver fern emblem. The Kiwis were represented by D T Jones, D Corbett, R Claxton, R McAuley, C W Ballard, W Brownlee, W R Brundell, W Knott, I Cook, George Campbell, captain, and R Braithwaite. Seven thousand turned out to watch the match and New Zealand won by three goals to one. New Zealand took the lead through Cook and Bill Mauder equalised for the Australians. Knott and Cook again scored for New Zealand in the second half and although Australia did create some chances, the home team deserved its win.

Australia managed to draw the second game in Wellington on



The Australian team for the first test match against New Zealand. Photo: Henry Gore.

24 June one-all. This was a dour, defensive match with both teams more concerned with blocking the opposition than trying to score, according to the contemporary reports. J Bratten and George Brown came into the Australian line-up in place of William Dane and Tom Thompson. Ballard scored for New Zealand after about half an hour and ten minutes later Bratten scored the Australian goal after a throw in.

The third test also resulted in a three-one win to the Kiwis in Auckland. George Camp-

bell, the Kiwi skipper opened the scoring early on and Cook made it two. Australia had its best spell early in the second half and George Brown got the only Australian goal with an excellent shot from distance. New Zealand restored its advantage when Dacre scored a third goal after Cartwright saved a shot by Campbell. Poor shooting let the Australians down. The play must have been typically robust as two Kiwis were knocked out during the match, but both recovered and played on.

Of the fourteen games played by the tourists, Australia won nine, so it was really only when they came up against New Zealand's full international team that they were found wanting. It may surprise some people to know that the game was so strong in New Zealand at the time, though the manager of the Australians, A. Morgan of Brisbane thought that the visit 'had done a great deal to liven up the game'. He said that the attendances at the international matches were 10,000, 14,000 and 9,000 and that

over 60,000 people saw the Australians play. There may be some exaggeration in these figures, but obviously the matches were well attended.

If there were no major shocks on the field, there were elsewhere. There were earthquakes near Taupo in Waikato on the North Island at the time.

The tourists returned home on 17 July and the tour was said to be a financial success. The tourists played Maitland on the Thursday and 'Next best' at Wentworth Oval on the Saturday following their return. This idea of the tourists playing matches after completing their overseas commitments became common. Henry Gore, the man who took the pictures of the first game, was a pioneer of film-making in New Zealand. He went to Hollywood and became friends with Charlie Chaplin.

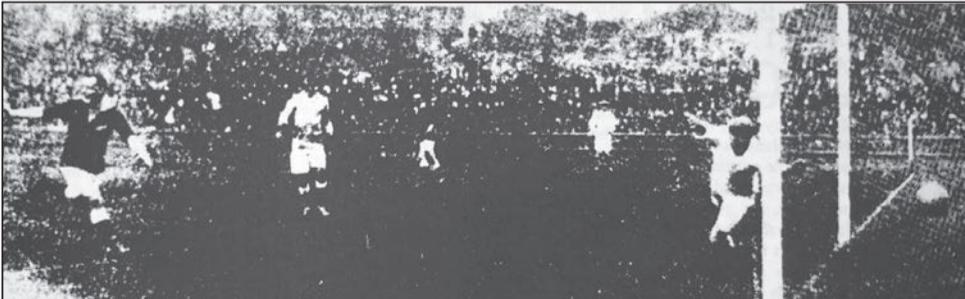
New Zealand sent a team to Australia the following year which won two of the three test matches played. Australia won by 2-1 in Brisbane but lost by 2-3 in Sydney and 1-4 in Newcastle, thanks largely to George Campbell who scored all four goals. He had contributed a hat-trick in Sydney.



Henry Gore, the man who took some of the pictures of the 1922 tour.
Source: Stills collection of the New Zealand Film Association.



John Margaritis of Hellas on the run. Source: Laurie Schwab collection. Deakin University Library.



A muddy Vic Janczyk of Polonia. Source: Laurie Schwab collection. Deakin University Library.

I am indebted to Nick Guoth, Damian Smith and Gavin Bertram for assistance with this column. Damian's online football museum is one of the wonders of the modern age <<http://www.ozfootball.net/museum/index.php/en/info>>, while Nick's research on football in the ACT, the Commonwealth Football Association and relations with Asia is breaking new ground. Gavin Bertram is completing his own research on the tour in 1922.

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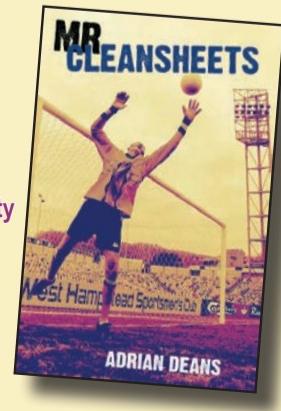
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We Love
Futsal

Pascoe Vale FC Has One Hand On Futsal Title

Round 21 of the Nike V-League had emotion, drama and goals. At the top of the table Pascoe Vale have one hand on the title, Vic Vipers have secured second spot with a win over third placed Hume FC. At the bottom of the table Brighton FC won to give them a slim hope of avoiding the automatic relegation position.

Essendon too good for Balwyn
FC Essendon have had a great run of form in recent weeks and it continued in round 21 with victory over FC Balwyn 6-3. Joaquin Jiminez scored a sublime hat-trick as Essendon look to build for the 2013 season. FC Balwyn on the other hand are in a dangerous position and will need to win next week to ensure they avoid the automatic relegation position.

FC Essendon 6 (J. Jiminez 3, E. Derera, A. Osorio, G. Canelo) def. FC Balwyn 3 (J. Berrios, D. Filionzi, U. Cicek)

Prahran finally record a victory
FC Prahran have finally recorded a win after the Christmas break as they defeated CF Brunswick 6-5. In a match that was full of attack, both teams created a number of opportunities to win the match. Prahran looked dangerous late in the game and their hard worked paid off as they took the points in a thriller.

FC Prahran 6 (A. Muktar 2, H. Kanjo 2, J. Conroy, K. Osman) def. CF Brunswick 5 (A. Apostolakis, D. Slovacek, R. Roslan, M. Barrigos, N. Yao)

Ashburton and Moreland share the spoils
Ashburton and Moreland share the points playing out a 6-6 draw. Moreland started the match the better of the two teams and with 4 key personal out they surprised Ashburton. Ashburton have also shown in recent weeks they can score from anywhere and when keeper Lorenzo De Paris scored to give Ashburton the lead 6-5 you thought the game was over. Moreland to their credit never gave in and with 25 seconds remaining Moreland equalized from a corner when keeper Emre Ocal shot found its way through the defence and into the far post for a dramatic finish to an exciting match.

Ashburton FC 6 (L. Kruel 2, J. Afonseca, L. De Paris, R. Ferguson, M. Rocca) drew with. Moreland FC 6 (S. Murat 3, S. Ingrosso 2, E. Ocal)



Pascoe Vale stars Joao Da Silva and Takuya Umeda celebrate a goal against Metropolitan FC
Photo: MATT MONTGOMERY



Ahmed Muktar of FC Prahran rounds the keeper during the match against CF Brunswick
Photo: MATT MONTGOMERY



Ashburton FC's Lucas Kruel scores in the dramatic draw against Moreland FC . Photo: MATT MONTGOMERY



Vic Vipers celebrate Heip Tran's goal during their match against Hume FC . Photo: MATT MONTGOMERY

Pascoe Vale does the business again

Pascoe Vale again showed why they are leading the competition with a solid 10-5 win over fifth place Metropolitan FC. Pascoe Vale dominated possession for large periods during the match and it was target Sofiane Soufi who was the star of the show with a four-goal haul. Aljija Redzepovic tried hard for Metro and chimed in with a hat-trick but his team had no answers for a superior Pascoe Vale side.

Pascoe Vale FC 10 (S. Soufi 4, J. Portillo, B. Polatti, J. Da Silva, T. Umeda, A. Redzepovic (OG), T. Gragic (OG)) def. Metropolitan FC 5 (A. Redzepovic 3, J. Julardzija 2)

Vipers win incident marred match

Viper win to secure second position with 5-2 victory over Hume FC. In a match that was much anticipated as both clubs were playing for second position it lived up to the hype early on with both teams playing some

quality Futsal. The second half was full of niggle and the good Vipers performance was marred when captain Miza Pedic was sent from the pitch after a disgraceful tackle in the dying minutes.

Vic Vipers FC 5 (M. Pedic 2, H. Tran, M. Avram, A. Cooper) def. Hume FC 2 (S. Cicek, A. Cooper (OG))

Brighton great escape still alive
Brighton has kept their slim hope of survival in the top flight alive with a 4-2 over Fitzroy FC. Coming into the

game Brighton required four points from the remaining two matches to give them a chance to avoid the automatic relegation position. Brighton's enthusiasm was evident from the opening whistle and Fitzroy had no answers as Brighton found the net to put the game out of reach.

Brighton FC 4 (T. Bayrakli, C. Safko, G. O'Reilly, D. Rafiti) def. Fitzroy FC 2 (I. Filipovic 2)

V-League Standings

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
1 Pascoe Vale FC	21	17	3	1	148	75	+73	54
2 Vic Vipers FC	21	16	3	2	111	64	+47	51
3 Hume FC	21	15	2	4	179	64	+115	47
4 Ashburton FC	21	13	3	5	106	62	+44	42
5 Metropolitan FC	21	13	0	8	150	109	+41	39
6 Moreland FC	21	11	1	9	119	143	-24	34
7 Fitzroy FC	21	8	1	12	84	99	-15	25
8 CF Brunswick	21	8	0	13	90	100	-10	24
9 FC Essendon	21	6	1	14	77	136	-59	19
10 FC Prahran	21	5	1	15	99	153	-54	16
11 FC Balwyn	21	3	1	17	83	181	-98	10
12 Brighton FC	21	3	0	18	55	114	-59	9

Round 21 Clashes Sunday March 10

- Vic Vipers FC 5-2 Hume FC
- Fitzroy FC 2-4 Brighton FC
- Metropolitan FC 5-10 Pascoe Vale FC
- Moreland FC 6-6 Ashburton FC
- FC Prahran 6-5 CF Brunswick
- FC Essendon 6-3 FC Balwyn

Round 22 Clashes Sunday March 17

- 3:00pm - Fitzroy FC vs. FC Balwyn
- 4:00pm - Metropolitan FC vs. Brighton FC
- 5:00pm - Hume FC vs. CF Brunswick
- 6:00pm - Moreland FC vs. Vic Vipers FC
- 7:00pm - Pascoe Vale FC vs. Ashburton FC
- 8:00pm - FC Prahran vs. FC Essendon

Top Goal Scorers

1 Vadim Mazurski - Hume FC	51
2 Aljija Redzepovic - Metropolitan FC	44
3 Burhan Koca - Moreland FC	40
4 Juso Julardzija - Metropolitan FC	37
5 Sofiane Soufi - Pascoe Vale FC	35

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NYL Season Concludes with Anti-Climax Finale

By Daniel Quinn

The 2012/13 National Youth League (NYL) came to an anticlimactic end with the Melbourne Victory being crowned NYL Champions for the first time, and the season can definitely be seen as a success with plenty youngsters earning themselves senior contracts.

The Victory, under the guidance of Darren Davies, travelled to the Central Coast in the last round with at least a draw ensuring their first title, while the Mariners needed to win to claim back-to-back championships. But due to the torrential weather in Gosford in the space of a couple of weeks the much-hyped "NYL Grand Final" was postponed twice, before FFA decided to cancel the fixture and record the game as a nil-all draw.

That draw was enough for Davies' squad to claim the title.

Most people affiliated with the Mariners were very disappointed with FFA's decision, and to be fair, so they should, as every side should be given the chance to fairly fight in such an important game as this was. The Victory might have won the competition on goal difference (by 26 goals) with both sides finishing with a record of twelve wins, one draw and five losses, but the Melburnians did technically win one more game.

That's if you take in account Central Coast's Round 6 match with the Brisbane Roar. The Roar won 1-0, however, the three points were taken off Brisbane and given to the Mariners since the Queenslanders fielded too many overage players. So the Mariners actually won eleven wins compared to Victory's twelve. But the Victory just don't deserve the title on their results, but also their performance and pure dominance over their opponents.

Davies' side averaged over three goals a game over the course of the season, scoring 57 (the most) and



Victory's Luc Jeggo (left) and Mariners' Louis Bozanic battle it out. The two sides were due to meet in the ultimate NYL title decider on the last day of the season, however abhorrent weather conditions forced the match to be postponed on two occasions. The NYL was awarded to the Victorians. Photo: JOHN PUNSHON

conceding only 20 (the least). The likes of Connor Pain, Andrew Nabbout, Luke O'Dea and Chris Cristaldo had sensational seasons and were all rewarded with their senior debuts. Pain and Nabbout also signed senior deals.

Credit should be given to the Mariners who stayed with the Victory all the way with both sides having considerable time in the lead. Attacker Patrick Dixon and defender Hayden Morton were standouts in a squad that regularly comprised of A-League squad members Adrian Pellegrino, Olivier Bozanic and Adam Kwasnik.

The Newcastle Jets finished in

third, six points behind the top two, lead by former Socceroo Clayton Zane.

Senior striker Marko Jesic played the majority of the season in the NYL side and was magnificent with thirteen goals, including three hat-tricks, before being rewarded with a spot in the senior squad in recent weeks.

But follow Jets forward Kale Bradberry got one over his teammate, finishing with the Golden Boot after scoring 16.

Jets fullback Andrew Hoole was another rising star of the NYL who earned himself a senior deal after

making seven A-League appearances.

After losing Captain Jason Geria to the Victory in November, the Roar ended the inconsistent season in fourth on 30 points, but would have finished in third if it wasn't for the aforementioned points deduction. But like the Victory, Brisbane's season can be classified as a success with Ben Lefin and Kwame Yeboah inking senior contracts. Yeboah and Skipper Corey Brown also made their A-League debut.

Senior squad members James Meyer and Korean Do Dong-Hyun were also frequently involved with

Lionel Messi needed only five minutes to open the scoring in sublime fashion, before putting his side level on aggregate with his second goal shortly before the interval.

David Villa put Barca 3-0 ahead 10 minutes into the second half, and Jordi Alba added the clincher in the last minute of injury time and Milan, despite a late improvement, could have little complaints about the 4-2 aggregate defeat.

Bayern Munich 0 Arsenal 2 (agg. 3-3)

Arsenal exited the Champions League at the last-16 stage for the third consecutive year despite beating Bayern Munich 2-0 in the second leg.

Olivier Giroud stunned the 68,000 sell-out Allianz Arena with a third-minute goal to give the visitors hope of pulling off a Munich miracle. Despite Bayern dominating for most of the match, Arsenal held firm at the back and Laurent Koscielny's 84th-minute header equalled scores on aggregate.

This set up a pulsating finale but Arsenal were unable to score the goal required to overturn the 3-1 first-leg deficit and exited by account of the away goals rule.

The two-legged defeat means that Bayern become the third European powerhouse in three years to knock Arsenal out at the last-16 juncture, following Barcelona in 2011 and AC



Galatasaray's Hamit Altintop takes the acclaim after his 37th-minute goal cancelled out Roman Neustädter's opener and levelled their tie against Schalke at 2-2 on aggregate

Milan in 2012.

Malaga 2 Porto 0 (agg. 2-1)

Malaga reached the quarter-finals of the Champions League after a 2-0 home triumph over Porto at La Rosaleda.

Heading into the second leg trailing 1-0 on aggregate, Malaga levelled the last-16 tie through a sublime goal from Isco just before half-time.

The hosts dominated the second

half after Porto midfielder Steven Defour was shown a red card in the 49th minute before Roque Santa Cruz secured the win with a header 13 minutes from time.

There was very little to separate the two teams at the Dragao three weeks ago and it was clear the return leg would follow suit within 10 minutes of kick off, but neither Joaquin nor Danilo managed to test the opposing goalkeeper from decent positions.

NYL Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
1 Melbourne Victory	17	12	0	5	57	20	37
2 CC Mariners	17	12	0	5	38	27	11
3 Newcastle Jets	18	10	1	7	52	36	16
4 Brisbane Roar	18	9	3	6	39	34	5
5 Perth Glory	18	8	1	9	45	45	0
6 Melbourne Heart	18	8	1	9	31	34	-3
7 WS Wanderers	18	7	4	7	29	39	-10
8 Adelaide United	18	6	4	8	35	42	-7
9 Sydney FC	18	6	3	9	41	46	-5
10 AIS	18	2	1	14	24	68	-44

*Brisbane Roar docked three points for rule breaches.

**Melbourne Victory crowned National Youth League 2012/13 Champions following the cancellation of their Round 18 match against Central Coast Mariners. After both sides finished the season equal on 37 points, Melbourne Victory's goal difference of positive 37 compared to Central Coast's positive 11 saw the Melbourne team retain top spot on the NYL ladder.

made his A-League debut at sixteen. Alec Urosevski and Peter Triantis also debuted with the latter also following the trend and penning a senior deal.

The Sky Blues though finished the season without Josh MacDonald who travelled to England to trial with football giants Liverpool.

Last but definitely not least are the AIS who only finished with two wins all season under coach Tony Vidmar, both against Perth, and with the worst goals for and against records.

But the AIS certainly will have some great memories from a tough season as Skipper Scott Galloway moved to the Victory and now regularly plays for the senior outfit.

Joshua Barresi also moved onto the Wanderers, while Steve Kuzmanovski shined throughout and remains with the Institute for the time being.

The NYL isn't about the results after all. The main aim is to develop the country's youngsters into A-League and potentially Socceroo players and if you take that into consideration the there is no doubt the 2012/13 season is a success on many fronts.

Round 16 Results

Celtic (0-3, 0-2) Juventus
Juventus wins 5-0 on agg.

Valencia (1-2, 1-1) Paris St Germain
PSG wins 3-2 on agg

Shakhtar Donetsk (2-2, 0-3) Borussia Dortmund
Dortmund wins 5-2 on agg.

Real Madrid (1-1, 2-1) Manchester United
Real Madrid wins 3-2 on agg.

Bayern Munich (3-1, 0-2) Arsenal
Bayern Muich wins 3-3 on away goals rule agg.

Malaga (0-1, 2-0) Porto
Malaga wins 2-1 on agg.

Galatasaray (1-1, 3-2) Schalke
Galatasaray wins 4-3 on agg.

Barcelona (0-2, 4-0) AC Milan
Barcelona wins 4-2 on agg.

Quarter Finalists

Juventus (Italy), Paris St Germain (France), Borussia Dortmund (Germany), Bayern Munich (Germany), Real Madrid (Spain), Barcelona (Spain), Malaga (Spain), Galatasaray (Turkey).

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Schalke 2 Galatasaray 3 (agg 3-4)

Galatasaray progressed to the quarter-finals of the Champions League thanks to a 3-2 away win against Schalke.

Roman Neustadter put the hosts ahead early on, but goals from Hamit Altintop and Burak Yilmaz turned the game on its head.

Michel Bastos equalised after the break, but a third goal proved to be a step too far for Jens Keller's side, and Umut Bulut ended the contest in second-half stoppage time.

Barcelona 4 AC Milan 0 (agg 4-2)

Barcelona marched into the Champions League quarter-finals with a 4-0 victory over AC Milan at Camp Nou on Tuesday.

The Catalans were tipped for an early exit from the competition after a 2-0 loss in Italy in the first leg of their round-of-16 clash, but became the first ever team to recover from that first-leg deficit with a display that showcased the best of their awesome attacking quality.



Fans Upset At Price Hike



By Francis Fields

A lot of discontent has been vented these past weeks amongst fans with with prices of match tickets for both Copa Libertadores and World Cup Qualifying matches.

An example of the prices were at Huachipato who are the current Chilean league champions, charging \$15,000 pesos, the equivalent of just over AU\$35 which is beyond affordability for most pockets as the cheapest for general admission, or the "galeria" section.

As for qualifiers that commence on the 26th of March, prices were hiked up to over AU\$30, the cheapest.

Despite such prices, the allocated tickets have been sold out as Chile hosts Uruguay at the Nacional stadium. In a continent wide survey, Chile tops the list for the highest attendance in World Cup qualifiers followed by Colombia, Uruguay and Argentina respectively.

Back to club level, a study by newspaper El Mercurio revealed Brazil tops the highest price range for match tickets in domestic club football with the average price of over AU\$20, with Copa Libertadores over \$30 and for the national team, over \$40 the most affordable.

These figures may not surprise many however in Latin American economies where the mean salary does not surpass \$400 a month, football becomes an expensive pastime.

The study also showed that Venezuela, very hardly hit by recession and the disruption of its leader Hugo Chavez comes in second with the highest ticket prices averaging over \$20, followed by Colombia and Argentina with \$15 equivalent, with Peru, Paraguay and Bolivia the cheapest from \$5 to \$10 each.

BERNARD, THE NEW STAR
Luiz Felipe Scolari's strategy since returning as Brazil coach in December last year has been clear; to form a core of experienced players who are performing well at club level and mould them into a side in time for the upcoming challenges of the Confederations Cup and then, ultimately, the World Cup beyond that.

Veterans Fred, Luis Fabiano, Hulk and Ronaldinho were all included in the squad to face England last month, while the Madrid-based duo of Kaka and Diego Costa have been called for upcoming challenges against Italy and Russia. The aim, as begun by former coach Mano Menezes,



SOLD OUT: Tickets for the World Cup qualifier derby between Peru and Chile are nowhere to be found.

is to surround the young attacking talents of Oscar, Neymar and Lucas Moura with experienced heads. The return of Kaká to the Brazil squad last October appeared to add a settling influence to a side that had been out of sorts and Scolari will doubtless hope the same occurs once more this month.

Does the insistence on certain age and experience quotas, though, result in the best players being selected? Supporters of Atletico Mineiro attacking midfielder Bernard, in particular, would argue not.

Bernard is the latest potential global star to have emerged from the Brazilian championship. While Neymar, Oscar and Lucas now claim headlines worldwide with their performances, though, the 5'5" forward's fame is currently more or less limited to his homeland. However, following some excellent recent performances, it may not remain that way for long. Indeed, it says much of his progress that his absence from the recent national side selection came as somewhat of a surprise to many. Mutterings in the media prior to the announcement indicated that the inform youngster would be handed his opportunity to impress in Scolari's side.

That was not to be but Bernard is clearly heading in the right direction. A recent Copa Libertadores hat-trick in his first competitive match outside Brazil was indication of his rise to the top, with Argentina's Arsenal de Sarandi simply unable to prevent him reaping havoc. The "little phenomenon", was the verdict of the Argentine media who were left flabbergasted that such a talent was not involved in the national team setup. An impressive tally of 11 goals and 11 assists in the 2012 Brazilian championship would suggest that their disbelief

has sound basis.

Bernard is also a hard worker without the ball, relentlessly tracking opponents and seeking to regain possession. Indeed, at club level, it is the willingness and industry of the youngster that somewhat allows team-mate Ronaldinho to play the game at his own pace. The former Barcelona man has, in turn, played some of his best football of recent years since joining the club.

The duo make an unusual partnership in many ways, but it was their symbiotic relationship that helped inspire Atletico Mineiro to a second placed finish last season. Ronaldinho, freed up by the unceasing energy of his colleague, was afforded space and time to influence the game in central areas. Despite the decline in his overall abilities, he remains more than capable of dismantling a defence in these conditions. Bernard, in turn, has collected numerous goals courtesy of his colleague's outstanding talent for threading a ball through the eye of a needle to prove he is more than just a workhorse.

Like nearly all in his position in Brazil, Bernard is capable of improvisation and invention that leave many astounded. He may not delve into his catalogue of tricks with the regularity of some but he is more than capable of pulling off the remarkable. Given his low centre of gravity and searing pace, though, Bernard often favours the more simple approach of embarrassing his adversary in an old-fashioned footrace. Fluid in his positioning, Bernard is one of the more modern playmakers that Brazil has to offer. Besides creativity and intelligence, he offers dynamism, goalscoring and, of course, industry to his side in attacking areas. He is, one might suggest, one of the best suited of the country's talents regarding the adaptation to the fluid, fast-

paced football that is prominent in the upper echelons of European football.

When Bernard's chance will come is unresolved but there is no doubt that he will eventually force his way into the Selecao reckoning. He may not be the equal of Neymar, who is on a level of his own talent-wise, but there is a growing feeling that he could match the levels of Lucas Moura or Oscar if given the chance to shine. A home-based international against Chile next month may just be his moment in the spotlight.

Scolari knows that Brazil will need experienced heads in 2014 but he will also know that he cannot afford not to select his best players, regardless of age. Bernard is certainly presenting the experienced Brazil manager with a very welcome selection dilemma to consider over the next 15 months. Wise money, though, would be stacked on his inclusion come June 2014.

Copa Libertadores wrap: Velez Sarsfield beats Penarol

Uruguayan giants Penarol are in danger of missing the knockout stages of the Copa Libertadores after losing on Tuesday.

Penarol – who have won the competition five times – dropped their second Group 4 match on the trot, losing 3-1 against Velez Sarsfield of Argentina.

They still sit second in the group, but only by goals scored, with Ecuadorian side Emelec equal on points and goal difference in third.

The latest defeat came despite Fabian Estoyanoff's 24th-minute penalty, which gave Penarol the lead.

Velez Sarsfield were playing in front of their home fans though, and they quickly mustered a re-



Young sensation Bernard has taken Brazilian football by storm.



Felipe Scolari has the weight of a nation on his shoulders.

sponse when Penarol goalkeeper Enrique Bologna scored an own goal.

Federico Insua then bagged a 75th-minute penalty before a late Jonathan Copete strike wrapped up the win for the Argentines.

Velez Sarsfield now top Group 4 with three wins from four matches.

In Group 2, Sporting Cristal claimed a 1-1 draw with Libertad of Paraguay.

Pablo Velazquez fired Libertad – who lead the group with eight points from four matches – ahead early in the second half before the Peruvian side levelled through Irven Avila on 74 minutes.

In other matches, last year's semi-finalists Universidad Chile slumped to a 2-0 home loss against Newell's Old Boys of Argentina.

Universidad still top the group but the win was crucial for Newell's Old Boys, who had failed to pick up a point in their two previous Group 7 matches.

Maximiliano Rodriguez and Martin Tonso scored for the winners.

And in Group 8, Venezuelan side Caracas came from behind to beat Brazilian outfit Gremio 2-1.

Scolari keen to emulate World Cup great

Luis Felipe Scolari is determined to win the World Cup with Brazil on home soil in 2014, emulating Italy legend Vittorio Pozzo's double success.

Scolari won the 2002 tournament with the Selecao and is looking to repeat the feat after retaking the

job in November 2012, replacing Mano Menezes.

"Now it's up to us to win the World Cup at home," he told La Gazzetta dello Sport.

"Playing a World Cup at home and going down in history tempted me back. The only coach who has won two World Championships was Vittorio Pozzo, in 1934 and 1938. I want to be the second."

"Italy lost a World Cup at home, France and Germany as well. All three, however, have also won one at home. Now it's our turn: this is what I will say to the team. I want to talk only of positive things. Before the final of the 2002 World Cup, we did not speak of the problem with Ronaldo in 1998 and with him we won."

The former Chelsea boss also reflected on his time with the Blues and admits that, while the owner was not the reason why he left the London club, some of the players did have a part in his departure.

"The results were not spectacular, but they were decent. I had problems with two or three players that made it difficult for me to stay," he said.

"Abramovich was not a problem. He was a good president, never intruded. For me it was sad to leave English football, I liked the organisation, the fans, and the style of the club."

Scolari also spoke of the coaches that he holds in high regard.

"(Jose) Mourinho is one for sure, (Pep) Guardiola another, (Vicente) Del Bosque was voted best coach in the world and (Sir Alex) Ferguson is the best of the past 20 years," he added.



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By Andrew Bishara

Rodgers' Liverpool learning the ropes

A couple of weeks ago, I spoke to a friend, an adamant Liverpool fan, who said that he believed his Reds team were exceptional against the bottom placed teams, but against the bigger boys, Manchester United, City, Chelsea etc, they struggled.

He had a point. Against the likes of Manchester United, City, Chelsea, Arsenal, Tottenham and even Everton, a total of 10 games so far this season, they never managed a single win. Until last Sunday.

The 3-2 over Tottenham marked the first "major" victory for Brendan Rodgers in his first season at Liverpool. In the process, it ended Tottenham's 12 match unbeaten run, saw a hat-trick of league wins for the first time this season, and some even say, ignited the chance for capturing European success.

The 3-2 over Tottenham marked the first "major" victory for Brendan Rodgers in his first season at Liverpool. In the process, it ended Tottenham's 12 match unbeaten run, saw a hat-trick of league wins for the first time this season, and some even say, ignited the chance for capturing European success.

It might seem a little too optimistic that Liverpool can eclipse Chelsea in the final push for Champions League football come the month of



Steve Gerrard secures the points for Liverpool in the 3-2 thriller over Spurs

May. They can make a strong finish to the season with a fifth place finish bringing another year of the Europa League. This year though wasn't about making European places; it was about progression and more importantly acceptance.

Rodgers came with a game plan, a way he wanted things done. The questions were there: how long would it take the Liverpool players to believe in his methods? Would they accept it with open arms? Or would they reject it?

Successful transitions or implementations are based on success. Pep Guardiola, the man who created the Messi-led Barcelona team, brought a very unique style of play to the Catalans team. The way, of which the players adopt the tiki-taka system, and the success it brought, meant the players believed in his approach to the game.

Of course, the calibre of players is vastly different between the two sides. Success is harder to come for Liverpool than Barcelona, given the current state of both sides. Credit is due to Rodgers, despite being short-changed in regards to the transfer funds has made a massive impact on the Reds.

The players have clearly taken Rodgers' plan on board. Three players

that best typify this change are Steven Gerrard, Stewart Downing and Luis Suarez. The former has had to adapt; known for his screaming long balls, and bustling runs, Gerrard has had to become the creator deep in the midfield, pulling the strings. He is the adaptation that Rodgers required.

As for Downing, once labelled the one of the worse transfers done by the club, has grown significantly throughout the year. His impact hasn't been enormous enough to be considered anything major, and there are still areas for improvement. The change though has been in attitude, and the result has clearly shown.

The Uruguayan, is the equivalent of what Xavi is to Barcelona. Not in skill, or quality, but in the systematic belief. Suarez is what Rodgers wants Liverpool to become: fast, slick, dangerous, goal hungry, but a determined winner, a team player, a fighter.

Success breeds belief, and while Liverpool won't have any major trophies in the cabinet this year, they've shown they are earmarked for future glory. Accepting the game plan was only the start. Now comes the hard part making: that step up from pretenders to contenders.

ENGLAND EPL

Last 5 games
Most recent first

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Manchester United	28	23	2	3	68	31	+37	71
2 Manchester City	28	17	8	3	51	24	+27	59
3 Tottenham Hotspur	29	16	6	7	51	36	+15	54
4 Chelsea	28	15	7	6	56	30	+26	52
5 Arsenal	28	13	8	7	53	32	+21	47
6 Liverpool	29	12	9	8	56	36	+20	45
7 Everton	28	11	12	5	44	35	+9	45
8 West Bromwich ...	29	13	4	12	40	38	+2	43
9 Swansea City	29	10	10	9	40	36	+4	40
10 Fulham	28	8	9	11	39	44	-5	33
11 Stoke City	29	7	12	10	27	35	-8	33
12 West Ham United	28	9	6	13	32	41	-9	33
13 Newcastle United	29	9	6	14	40	50	-10	33
14 Norwich City	29	7	12	10	27	45	-18	33
15 Sunderland	29	7	9	13	32	41	-9	30
16 Southampton	29	6	10	13	39	51	-12	28
17 Aston Villa	29	6	9	14	28	54	-26	27
18 Wigan Athletic	28	6	6	16	33	55	-22	24
19 Reading	29	5	8	16	35	56	-21	23
20 Queens Park Ra... <td>29</td> <td>4</td> <td>11</td> <td>14</td> <td>24</td> <td>45</td> <td>-21</td> <td>23</td>	29	4	11	14	24	45	-21	23

Everton v Man City
West Ham PSTD Man Utd
Man City PSTD Wigan Athletic
Norwich C 0 - 0 Southampton
QPR 3 - 1 Sunderland
Reading 1 - 2 Aston Villa
WBA 2 - 1 Swansea City
Fulham PSTD Chelsea
Newcastle Utd 2 - 1 Stoke City
Liverpool 3 - 2 Tottenham

Chelsea v West Ham Utd
Wigan Athletic v Newcastle

Latest Results

Stoke City v Arsenal
Man Utd v Reading
Southampton v Norwich City
Tottenham v Fulham

One To Watch This Weekend...
How will Reading bounce back from the sacking of Brian McDermott? The favourite is Paolo Di Canio to succeed him. He'll (or whoever takes up the reigns) travels to Manchester United. Probably the toughest assignment on the first day of the job.

working man, he's loved by Mancini. Lescott has been on the outer for a while, and has rarely been given the chance this season, much like Kolo Toure.

As for Tevez, what can be said about the Argentinian? No one doubts his talents and nowadays his cooled temperament. The recent report that he was caught speeding without a drivers' licence means a possible jail sentence. That action might cost his future with the club. Would City harbour a player who could be jailed? Or would it be better to cut him loose?

Also, no player is safe if the right deal comes along. That might be particular difficult, considering that it's City who offer the ridiculous fees and money for players. Nevertheless, it's happened before (eg. Balotelli to AC Milan and who thought that would happen?)

Come the end-of-season; expect a vicious and violent cull. There will be definite departures. City's next game is against Everton at Goodison Park, but unfortunately for some of the players the audition has already begun.

Andrew Bishara runs the popular football website <http://thetrequartista.com>

Will Sir Alex decide that Rooney's time is up?

London Eye



By Eddie Gray

There was once a time, not long ago, when a Manchester United side without Wayne Rooney was incomprehensible.

The talismanic forward would often be the key figure in the United team, with his goals, assists and general influence around the pitch unrivalled.

But on the night of the Manchester club's departure from the Champions League, in controversial fashion to Real Madrid, their biggest game since the defeat in the final of the same competition to Barcelona in 2011, Rooney was confined to the bench until late on in the second half.

Back in the 2011 campaign the Englishman was the figure manager Sir Alex Ferguson based his side around, however, fast forward to March the fifth 2013, both Nani and Danny Welbeck were favoured to the previously imperious Rooney.

The pace of Nani and Welbeck on the counter attack was the obvious thought in Ferguson's mind, as well as the latter's ability to be disciplined and negate the influence of Xabi Alonso, but you still would have expected to see Rooney deployed out wide because of his impressive work rate.

However, his omission in such a game of enormous magnitude has left many wondering whether the former Everton man still possesses the confidence and trust of his manager.



It's new contract time for Wayne Rooney at Old Trafford. Will Sir Alex Ferguson have room for the English superstar at Manchester United?

Ever since the summer transfer of Robin Van Persie to the Red Devils Rooney has had to play second fiddle to his new team mate, with the Dutchman instantly taking to life at Old Trafford and emerging as the most prominent attacking threat at the club, displacing the Englishman himself.

Although Van Persie has become the main man at United his strike partner has been a regular for the majority of the season, with both paired in attack regularly, but when the biggest moment of the season arose there was no place for Rooney.

Not selecting the Englishman raised eyebrows amongst many at the time, especially when you con-

sider his performance the previous weekend. The striker had assisted two and scored himself in the 4-0 demolition of Norwich making the decision even more sceptical.

So despite being in form Rooney was left out, which highlighted the choice to do so was driven by Ferguson's belief that Rooney has failed to deliver to the level you would expect from England's 6th time record goal scorer.

The forward has been excellent in fits and starts this season, there is no doubt about that, but the lack of consistency in his performances has been a real worry. Ferguson has often stated, this year alarmingly regularly, that the United number 10 'takes a few games to

get fit after an injury'. This admission has led some to believe that Rooney is not looking after his body like a top level athlete should do, which leaves him short of the sharpness required to excel at the very top level week in week out.

Going back to the Real Madrid game and the decision to not select Rooney in the starting 11, it also raises the issue over whether Ferguson still believes in the attacking prowess of his forward and what he can provide on the grandest stage. Previously when Cristiano Ronaldo was the pinnacle of the United team Rooney would be used in a more reserved role, where he would use his tenacity and desire in defence and then could spring forward

and utilise his passing and creative streak. But now it seems the attacking attributes he brings to the table, and his off the ball work, are no longer valued as highly by Ferguson, who clearly indicated by picking Welbeck in the Madrid game that he has overtaken Rooney as the chief supporting striker in elite matches.

There is no doubt that Rooney will play in the majority of United games until the end of the season, the Premier League hasn't this year provided the challenges of the Champions League, and his talents are still at the level where he could quite easily be the player who is most impressive for his side until the end of the year, but the signs at the moment are that Ferguson has grown tired of the man he signed as a youngster.

Although Van Persie has become the main man at United his strike partner has been a regular for the majority of the season, with both paired in attack regularly, but when the biggest moment of the season arose there was no place for Rooney.

But in complete contrast, Ferguson gave his word in a press conference on Friday the eighth that Rooney would be at the club next season, but then again he also denied the sales of Ronaldo, Veron and that the club were in for Van Persie last summer, leaving the Rooney saga up in the air, still with no real answer.

If Rooney does depart it may shock many, but the United manage-

er has never been shy of getting rid of high profile players who he feels have become stagnant: Ruud Van Nistelrooy and David Beckham to name but two.

The demand for his signature may not be as high as it once was as his current wage stands at £250,000 and only a few clubs can and even less will be willing to meet that. The two stand out options if, and it is still a big if, Rooney does move on are Paris St Germain and Chelsea. Manchester City and Real Madrid stand just behind those two, but a move to France or London seem the most likely as United are unlikely to sell to their nearest rivals and Madrid already have a plethora of attacking options.

The potential PSG transfer would suit Rooney's current employers as they could easily pay the required fee, probably between £20-30 million, and could also meet the players wage demands, however it is debateable whether Rooney would want to move to another country with his young family and learn another language whilst trying to live up to a huge reputation.

Therefore a deal with Chelsea could have the highest possibility as the relocation required would be far less dramatic. They, like PSG, could match all the financial requirements, but are also in desperate need of a striker and a marquee signing is something owner Roman Abramovich loves to associate himself with.

It could be the end of an era at Old Trafford come the end of the year, with another star player potentially exciting, and many will rightly question the decision if it goes through, but what Sir Alex Ferguson has proven in the past is that the club will always be bigger than any player, no matter what reputation they possess.

And who can argue with his track record?



By Luca Cetta

Ciao Palermo and Pescara?

Palermo and Pescara continued their poor form to move closer to Serie B, while at the other end of the table Juventus strengthened their grip on the Scudetto with a dramatic win, coupled with a Napoli loss. There were contrasting fortunes for the Milan duo.

25 coaching changes 11 years. 25 times Palermo President Maurizio Zamparini has waved goodbye, not always permanently, to a Coach – 51 if you include his years as owner of Venezia. Seemingly after each Palermo loss the tactician is at risk. The volcanic owner is notoriously short-term in his thinking. Some seasons the Sicilians have been able to absorb the changes and survive. Not so in 2012-13.

Palermo sat 19th ahead of the clash with fellow relegation threatened club Siena, having not won since November and just three times all season. Giuseppe Sannino started the season as Coach, but after three games was replaced by Gian Piero Gasperini. He lasted until February, when Alberto Malesani was hired. His reign lasted just 19 days. Back on the bench, Gasperini was hoping for a reversal in fortunes against the Tuscan club. The pair were locked on 21 points, although Siena would



Substitute Emanuele Giaccherini came to the rescue for Juventus with a last-gasp winner against Catania.

be clear of the relegation zone without a six-point deduction.

Tension was high at the Stadio Renzo Barbera. Siena had won just once on the road all term and their poor streak looked set to continue when Anselmo scored. Up at the break, Palermo were unable to kick-on. Stefano Sorrentino came out for a cross but never got close to the ball and Innocent Emegha scored his fifth Siena goal since joining in January. Alessandro Rosina converted a penalty to give the Bianconeri a precious victory. It leaves Palermo precariously close to Serie B after nine seasons.

Rosanero director Giorgio Perinetti feels their issues are psychological, while Beppe Iachini is confident his side can survive. "We tried to put in a good performance and played good football. We look ahead with faith."

On Monday Gasperini left by 'mutual consent', making it four coaching changes this season, more than the number of victories. To

complete the symmetry, Sannino has returned to the bench. Simply incredible.

Joining Palermo with one foot in Serie B is Pescara, who despite a coaching change came up short at Atalanta. Cristiano Bergodi was replaced by Cristian Bucchi, but the youth team Coach doesn't have a Serie A coaching licence, so was joined by Bruno Nobile on the bench. Gaetano D'Agostino fired Pescara into a shock lead, but a clumsy foul gave German Denis the chance to equalise from the penalty spot. He made no mistake. The Argentine then likely sealed Pescara's fate when he smashed home the winner from close range in the second half.

Juventus left it late to defeat a stubborn Catania. The League leaders hit the post and were continually frustrated by Rolando Maran's side. That was until the 91st minute, when substitute Emanuele Giaccherini finished from close range as the ball bobbed around in the

penalty area.

While there was late joy for Antonio Conte's side, things were different for Napoli. They succumbed to a 2-0 loss at Chievo, continuing their poor run versus the Flying Donkeys. Napoli have now lost four of their five Verona meetings, after Boukary Drame's thumper from distance and Cyril Thereau's sealer. Edinson Cavani's goal drought extended to six League matches. The Uruguayan saw a second half penalty saved.

Milan prepared for their Barcelona showdown with a 2-0 win at Genoa. Giampaolo Pazzini was hobbling when he netted the opener, while his replacement Mario Balotelli scored the decisive second. Genoa felt they should have had at least one penalty as four first-half incidents went against them. City rivals Inter followed up a terrible Europa League showing at Tottenham by falling 1-0 at home to Bologna. Alberto Gilardino ruined the lacklustre Nerazzurri's 105th birthday celebrations when he scored in the

second half.

Elsewhere, a goal in each half saw Fiorentina overcome Lazio in Rome. Udinese came from behind to draw with Roma, while Victor Ibarbo's hat-trick gave Cagliari a 3-1 win over Sampdoria at empty Stadio Is Arenas. Finally, Torino were ahead at Parma in the 76th minute but collapsed to lose 4-1, with Amauri scoring a hat-trick.

Looking ahead:
Can Napoli salvage second?

A few weeks ago they were eyeing Scudetto glory. Now it seems Napoli are more concerned with guarding second position – the last automatic Champions League spot – from a red-hot Milan. Napoli will welcome back captain Paolo Cannavaro from suspension and need Cavani to fire as they face Atalanta on Sunday.

Meanwhile, after their disappointing midweek elimination at the hands of Barcelona, Rossoneri minds return to domestic matters.

They have their sights set on second. Pazzini is hoping to play after missing the Champions League clash, when they take on crisis club Palermo.

Fiorentina are now in fourth after their win at Lazio and Inter's loss and will want to keep hold of their European position when they host Genoa. The Rossoblu lost for the second straight week and have another tough clash in Florence to negotiate. They have Siena close behind in the final relegation place and the Tuscan club will look to put the pressure on against Cagliari.

Elsewhere, Juventus can take another step towards the Scudetto when they face Bologna. They have not won there for the past two seasons. Catania will look to bounce back when they host Udinese, while Pescara are in action against Chievo. Roma still have their sights set on Europe and need to win to keep that aspiration alive when they face Parma. Sampdoria take on Inter and finally, Torino face Lazio.



By Pepe Lopez

Brilliant Barcelona Back To Their Best

Lead by 2 early first half goals by the 4 time Ballon D'Or winner Lionel Messi, Barcelona became the first team to overcome a 2-0 deficit in the final stages of the "Champions League", adding another 2 goals in the second half to win their Round of 16 tie against AC Milan, 4-2 on aggregate.

Speaking to www.uefa.com, Lionel Messi had these comments after the match; "Really, we needed a night just like that not only to get through but to erase that result in Milan. Everything came off perfectly. We did it. From the fifth minute when we got that important first goal, we just went after Milan in every moment. We wanted that opening goal as soon as possible in the match not only to cut the deficit but to make the fans feel it was going to happen. It was a really lightning quick movement of the ball to get it to me and, happily, I put it away."

"Perhaps in the last few matches we've lost a little of our form. We knew, however, that to go through this tie all we really needed was to get back to being ourselves. We envisaged what kind of performance this needed to be and how to produce it.



Lionel Messi and David Villa were too hot to handle for AC Milan

This is the Barca that we and our fans want to see every game. This is the kind of performance we've been producing for years."

In qualifying for the quarter-finals, Barcelona dropped from \$6.50 outsiders just prior to kick-off, to \$2.60 outright favourites for the 2013 Champions League title.

Despite the impressive display of football from Barca, AC Milan did have their chances to cause an upset in the 2nd leg at the Camp Nou in Barcelona. None more so than AC Milan's M'bappe Niang who was through on goal in the first half with only Barca's goalkeeper Victor Valdes to beat, however his strike on goal hit the upright and was eventually cleared to safety by the home team.

AC Milan's Ingacio Abate had this to say, as quoted on AC Milan's website, of AC Milan's capitulation at the Camp Nou; "It's a shame as we had the chance to do them some dam-

age. This season was a real chance to go further in this competition and to knock them out. They started very well but they were scared after the first leg result. We had a couple of chances but we didn't take them. There's a bit of bitterness as we could have managed things better in the middle of the field."

"We just gave them the first half. We didn't play at all and that was a mistake. You can't just give them an entire half of the game. We created three or four chances in the second half but we didn't make the most of them."

Barcelona FC are still without their Coach Tito Vilanova, who is away in New York, USA receiving specialist treatment for throat cancer.

Tito is expected to be back in Barcelona in time for the next stage of the UEFA Champions League. The draw for the quarter-finals will be held Friday March 15 at UEFA headquarters

SPAIN La Liga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Barcelona	27	23	2	2	85	30	+55	71	W L W W W
2 Real Madrid	27	18	4	5	66	25	+41	58	W W W W W
3 Atletico Madrid	27	18	3	6	48	24	+24	57	L D W W L
4 Malaga	27	12	8	7	38	25	+13	44	D D L W W
5 Real Sociedad	27	12	8	7	45	34	+11	44	W D W D W
6 Real Betis	27	13	4	10	39	39	+0	43	W D W L D
7 Valencia	27	12	6	9	38	40	-2	42	L D D W W
8 Rayo Vallecano	27	13	2	12	36	43	-7	41	W D L W W
9 Getafe	27	11	6	10	37	44	-7	39	D W W W L
10 Levante	27	10	6	11	32	40	-8	36	D D D L L
11 Real Valladolid	27	9	8	10	35	34	+1	35	D D W L D
12 Sevilla	27	10	5	12	39	40	-1	35	L W L W L
13 Espanyol	27	8	11	11	31	37	-6	32	L D L W W
14 Athletic Club	27	9	5	13	32	50	-18	32	W W L L L
15 Osasuna	27	7	7	13	23	30	-7	28	W L W D
16 Granada	27	7	6	14	25	38	-13	27	D L L L L
17 Real Zaragoza	27	7	5	15	25	38	-13	26	W W L D D
18 Mallorca	27	6	6	15	28	50	-22	24	W W L D D
19 Celta de Vigo	27	6	5	16	26	38	-12	23	L L W L L
20 Deportivo La C...	27	3	8	16	29	58	-29	17	L D L L L

in Switzerland.

La Liga wrap:**Ronaldo brace sinks Celta**

Real Madrid had Cristiano Ronaldo to thank as they struggled past a resilient Celta Vigo side 2-1 in La Liga action on Sunday.

The Portuguese star scored twice in what was a sloppy win for Jose Mourinho's side, who looked a far cry from the team that overcame Manchester United in the Champions League last week.

Ronaldo scored his first in the 61st minute after Celta failed to clear a Luka Modric corner before Real were caught out from a quick throw-in just two minutes later, allowing Iago Aspas to level the scores.

Real goalkeeper Diego Lopez nearly gifted Aspas a second after he spilled the ball in the area but the visitors were soon ahead again after Kaka was

brought down in the area by Varas, Ronaldo coolly chipping the ball in from the penalty spot.

Gonzalo Higuain missed a pair of chances to add some gloss to the finish and Mourinho's blushes were spared in the last minute of normal time as Park Chu-Young's header hit the bar and went behind.

The win sees Real overtake cross-town rivals Atletico Madrid into second place on the table after Diego Simeone's side suffered a 1-0 loss at home to Real Sociedad.

Xabi Prieto struck what proved to be the match-winner for Sociedad in the 53rd minute as Atletico's winless streak extended to three matches.

In the day's other games, Athletic Bilbao managed a 1-0 win over Valencia while Levante and Getafe played out a 0-0 draw.

Pardeza: Real Madrid want to win**it all**

Real Madrid executive Miguel Pardeza has warned the club's

rivals that they are intent on winning every title available to them. Jose Mourinho's side have struggled in retaining their La Liga crown this season, but are still in the hunt for both the Champions League and Copa del Rey.

"The goal is to win all the titles. We do not value what others do, we focus on our games," the 48-year-old told Marca.

Mourinho's future at the Santiago Bernabeu has been the subject of widespread speculation of late, but Pardeza refused to comment on the rumours.

"I will not contribute to the debate about Mourinho," he added.

The former Spain international spent three years in the Spanish capital as a player before going to Real Zaragoza.

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CROATIA 1.HNL									
P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first	
1 Dinamo Zagreb	23	16	3	4	49	18	+31	51	D W W W L
2 Hajduk Split	23	11	6	6	33	18	+15	39	L W L W W
3 Lokomotiva	23	11	6	6	36	27	+9	39	W L W D W
4 Split	23	11	4	8	37	28	-9	37	W D L W L
5 Rijeka	23	10	7	6	32	29	+3	37	W D D L D
6 Slaven Koprivnica	23	9	5	9	30	35	-5	32	L L D L D
7 Osijek	23	6	11	6	21	20	+1	29	D D D L W
8 Istra 1961	23	6	8	9	22	26	-4	26	W D D D L
9 Cibalia	23	6	5	12	20	33	-13	23	W L D W L
10 Zadar	23	6	5	12	24	42	-18	23	L W L W W
11 Zagreb	23	6	4	13	19	40	-21	22	L W L W L
12 Inter Zaprešić	23	4	8	11	25	32	-7	20	L L D L L

TURKEY Süper Lig									
P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first	
1 Galatasaray	25	13	8	4	46	28	+18	47	L D W W W
2 Fenerbahçe	25	12	7	6	43	29	+14	43	W L W W W
3 Beşiktaş	25	11	10	4	51	35	+16	43	D W W D W
4 Bursaspor	25	9	10	6	37	32	+5	37	L W L W W
5 Kasımpaşa	25	10	7	8	35	27	+8	37	D W L W L
6 Antalyaspor	25	11	4	10	39	37	+2	37	L W L D L
7 Kayserispor	25	10	6	9	33	33	+0	36	D W W W D
8 Eskisehirspor	25	8	11	6	38	29	+9	35	D D D L W
9 Genglerbirliği	25	8	10	7	36	35	+1	34	W D L W L
10 Sivasspor	25	9	5	11	27	32	-5	32	W L L L W
11 Trabzonspor	25	8	7	10	26	29	-3	31	D L W L L
12 Elazığspor	25	7	9	9	21	35	-14	30	W W W L L
13 Karabükspor	25	8	6	11	30	40	-10	30	D L L D L
14 Orduspor	25	6	11	8	29	31	-2	29	L W L D D
15 Gaziantepspor	25	7	8	10	27	40	-13	29	D D D D L
16 İstanbul BB	25	7	8	10	29	30	-1	29	D D D D L
17 Akhisar Beledi...	25	5	8	12	21	35	-14	23	D L W L W
18 Mersin İdmanyurdu	25	4	9	12	25	36	-11	21	

SERBIA Super Liga									
P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first	
1 Partizan	18	15	1	2	52	12	+40	46	W W W D W
2 Crvena Zvezda	18	12	2	4	37	24	+13	38	W D W L W
3 Vojvodina	18	9	8	1	20	12	+8	35	D W W W D
4 Jagodina	18	10	2	6	20	15	+5	32	L W L W W
5 Rad Beograd	18	7	7	4	21	14	+7	28	D D D D W
6 Sloboda Užice	18	7	7	4	22	22	+0	28	D W D W L
7 Javor Ivanjica	18	8	3	7	28	17	+11	27	D W L W W
8 Spartak Subotica	18	6	6	6	25	21	+4	24	D L D D L
9 OFK Beograd	18	6	4	8	20	22	-2	22	L L D W W
10 Radnički Niš	18	5	6	7	16	27	-11	21	W W D D L
11 Hajduk Kula	18	5	4	9	20	21	-1	19	W L W W W
12 Novi Pazar	18	4	7	7	18	23	-5	19	L W D L L
13 Donji Srem	18	4	5	9	13	22	-9	17	D L D L L
14 BSK Borča	18	4	3	11	17	42	-25	15	D L L L L
15 Radnički 1923 ...	18	2	7	9	13	25	-12	13	D L D D L
16 Smederevo	18	1	6	11	8	31	-23	9	D L L L L

GERMANY Bundesliga									
P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first	
1 Bayern München	25	21	3	1	67	10	+57	66	W W W W W
2 Borussia Dortmund	25	13	7	5	55	30	+25	46	L W D W L
3 Bayer Leverkusen	25	13	6	6	45	32	+13	45	L W D W D
4 Schalke 04	25	11	6	8	43	40	+3	39	W W W D L
5 Eintracht Fran...	25	11	6	8	38	35	+3	39	D L D L D
6 Hamburger SV	25	11	5	9	30	33	-3	38	W D L W W
7 Mainz 05	25	10	7	8	33	29	+4	37	W D D D D
8 Freiburg	25	9	9	7	32	28	+4	36	L D D W W
9 Borussia M'gl...	25	8	11	6	34	35	-1	35	D W D L D
10 Hannover 96	25	10	4	11	47	45	+2	34	D L W D W
11 Nürnberg	25	7	10	8	26	32	-6	31	W D D D D
12 Wolfsburg	25	8	6	11	29	39	-10	30	W L D L W
13 Werder Bremen	25	8	5	12	40	49	-9	29	D L L L W
14 Stuttgart	25	8	5	12	26	43	-17	29	L D L W L
15 Fortuna Düsseldorf	25	7	7	11	31	35	-4	28	L D L W L
16 Augsburg	25	4	9	12	22	38	-16	21	L W W L D
17 Hoffenheim	25	5	4	16	30	49	-19	19	W L L L D
18 Greuther Fürth	25	2	8	15	44	40	-26	14	L D D D L

HOLLAND Eredivisie									
P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first	
1 Ajax	26	15	9	2	59	25	+34	54	W W D W D
2 PSV	26	17	2	7	81	29	+52	53	L W L W D
3 Feyenoord	26	16	5	5	51	32	+19	53	W W W L W
4 Vitesse	26	15	6	5	51	31	+20	51	W W W W D
5 Utrecht	26	13	6	7	39	29	+10	45	W L W L L
6 Twente	26	12	8	6	40	25	+15	44	L L D D D
7 ADO Den Haag	26	8	12	6	42	44	-2	36	D W D W W
8 NEC	26	10	6	10	35	42	-7	36	L L W L W
9 Heerenveen	26	8	8	10	38	47	-9	32	W W W L D
10 Heracles	26	7	10	9	50	53	-3	31	L W L D W
11 Groningen	26	8	6	12	25	40	-15	30	D L W L W
12 NAC Breda	26	7	7	12	28	43	-15	28	D L W D L
13 RKC Waalwijk	26	6	8	12	27	34	-7	26	L W L L L
14 AZ	26</td								

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